





# History of Bengal, Bihar & Orissa, under British Rule

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## CHAPTER I.

### Early Trading Stations.

**Pioneer efforts.**—The British connection with India may be said to have had its genesis in 1599, when an association for trade with India was formed by about 100 merchants of London. This association, which was to develop into the greatest of all chartered companies, received next year a charter of incorporation from Queen Elizabeth under the title of the Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies. From the outset the Company was anxious to tap the trade of Bengal, of whose resources a favourable account had been given by Ralph Fitch, a merchant of London, who travelled through different parts of the country in 1586 and again stayed there during the winter of 1588-89. Sir Thomas Roe, who in 1615 was sent by James I as an ambassador to the Emperor Jahangir, endeavoured to obtain trading concessions in Bengal, but without success, and had to leave after three years without obtaining the treaty which was the primary object of his embassy. Roe

appears to have favoured an attempt to open up trade with Bengal by the overland route. The Surat Council objected that Bengal was a hot country and most of its inhabitants very poor the Dutch and Portuguese had already established their trade on the coast, transport by land would be not only hazardous but costly. Roe brushed aside these considerations of caution "That Bengala should be poor I see no reason it feeds this country with wheat and rice it sends sugar to all India it hath the finest cloth and pintadoes musk civet and amber."

The number of Portugalls residing is a good argument for us to seek it it is a sign that there is good doing. An abbeys was ever a token of a rich soil and store of crows of plenty of carrion. It is to be understood we must fire them out and maintain our trade at the pike's end.

The overland route was eventually decided upon. Patna the capital of Bihar was selected as the first place at which to set up a trading station and two factors or agents Robert Hughes and John Parker were sent there from Surat in 1620. Hughes started with bills of exchange to the value of Rs. 4000 as his only stock in trade but was

soon joined by Parker bringing merchandise. At Patna they received a warm welcome from the Governor of Bihar, Mukarrab Khan, who had a shrewd idea of the value of trade to himself as well as to the country. In the same year, according to Jesuit records, he invited a Jesuit priest to Patna from the Portuguese settlement at Hooghly and offered to build a church. He confessed to the priest who was sent in response to this invitation that he had been baptized at Goa and desired to live like a good Christian, but could not profess his faith openly for fear of losing his appointment. The Jesuit father, however, suspected that his real aim was to enrich himself by inducing Portuguese merchants to settle at Patna.

The English factors did not stay long at Patna. In March 1621 Patna was swept by a fire, which destroyed their house. The friendly Mukarrab Khan had been transferred and had been succeeded by Prince Parwiz, second son of Jahangir. The new Governor started to find houses for his entourage by turning out permanent residents among others, the English, who had managed to get a second house after the fire, were evicted. Homeless in the sultry

heat of June they plaintively reported that they had to wander about for ten days seeking to "cover ourselves and goods though but with grass to debar the heat and rains now in excess. The Patna station moreover did not prove a profitable concern the only trade done was in calicoes and silk and the cost of transport was heavy. It is not surprising that the Surat Council ordered the factory to be closed and Hughes and Parker left in September 1621.

A second but no more successful attempt to establish a trading station at Patna was made in 1632 when Peter Mundy went there under the orders of the President and Council of Surat. He did a little business in quicksilver and vermilion but finding the prospects of trade were poor he left after two months. His mission was in fact due to a blunder for it was discovered afterwards that Patna had been written in his orders by a clerical error for Samana a town in Patiala.

**Settlements in Orissa**—It was not by the overland route but by the long sea lane their traditional highway that the English

were to obtain a footing in Bengal. A trading station had been established at Masulipatam in the Kistna (Krishna) district of Madras about 1625, and the eclipse of the power of the Portuguese seemed to provide an excellent opportunity for an advance further up the east coast. The Portuguese had excited the wrath of Shah Jahan by the piratical raids and the slave trade in which their sea rovers engaged. He ordered their colony at Hooghly to be extirpated, the town was sacked (1632) and the survivors deported to Agra.

In March 1633 the Agent of Masulipatam sent a little party of eight men under Ralph Cartwright in a country-boat, which put in at Harispurgarh, a small port at the mouth of the Patua river in the Cuttack district. Whether by accident or design, a Portuguese vessel came there too, probably from Pipili, a place further up the coast, which has long since disappeared, but which was then a much frequented port and a headquarters of the Portuguese pirates and merchants. The Portuguese, afraid to attack the English vessel, enlisted the help of some of "the ribble-rabble rascals" of the town and set upon the English, who were rescued by the

local Raja the fighting ending with the capture of the Portuguese vessel

Cartwright with two companions one of whom Bruton has left a picturesque account of their adventures then went to Cuttack in order to get a license for trade from the Nawab or Governor of Orissa who held office under the Viceroy of Bengal The Governor gave them audience in his court and slipping off his sandals put out his foot to our merchant to kiss which he twice refused to do but at last he was fain to do it Cartwright presented his petition but soon found himself accused for the Portuguese captain appeared with a complaint of piratical seizure of his vessel Cartwright claimed it as a lawful prize whereupon to the discomfiture of both parties the Governor promptly disposed of the dispute by ordering the vessel with its cargo to be confiscated This summary judgment was too much for Cartwright who was no courtier but a merchant tenacious of his rights He rose up in great anger and departed saying that if he could not have right here he would have it in another place and so went his way not taking leave of the Nabob nor of any other At which abrupt departure they all admired

The Governor took his bluntness in good part, sent for him again and found him as determined as before "With a stern undaunted countenance" Cartwright declared that "he had done his masters of the honourable Company wrong, which could not be so endured or put up" The Governor began to ask what manner of men these English were, what were their naval power and possessions, The replies which he received impressed him no less, we may believe, than Cartwright's firmness He was assured that the English were so strong at sea that no vessel, great or small, could leave the Mughal dominions without risk of capture The upshot was that the Governor kept the Portuguese vessel but gave the English permission to trade within his territories free of all customs duties The English for their part were not to capture any Mughal vessels but assist any that were in distress, either from the attacks of enemies or from the perils of the sea

Elated at his success, Cartwright proceeded to establish a factory at Hariharpur, a place (now known as Jagatsinghpur) 25 miles from Cuttack, where he had been hospitably entertained on his way from the coast



Next month another factory was started at Balasore. Both factories had a dismal start, owing to ignorance of local trade conditions to sickness and death and also to the attacks of the Dutch and Portuguese on their sea-going vessels. The Balasore factory survived in spite of these initial difficulties. That at Hariharpur was still further handicapped by the silting up of the river on which it stood and had to be closed about 1642.

**The advance to Bengal** — It is at first sight somewhat surprising that though a share in the trade of Bengal was one of the first objectives of the Company it did not make a settlement there till half a century after its incorporation. The unsettled state of the country and difficulties of navigation were both deterrents as well as the fact that the export trade in the early days of the seventeenth century was in the hands of the Portuguese. The Dutch Governor General at Batavia declared in 1627 that there was no hope of profitable trade in Bengal because of constant wars and rebellions and frequent changes in the administration. The seaboard was moreover infested by Magh and Arabian

pirates and Portuguese buccaneers, especially near the Meghna, while the shoals and quicksands of the river Hooghly to the east made navigation dangerous "We are mere strangers" in Bengal, wrote Methwold (1620) "The coast is too dangerous and our shipping too great to adventure them amongst so many shelves and sands" In any case too there was little temptation to proceed up the Hooghly so long as its trade was in the hands of the Portuguese; It was not till after their overthrow that either the Dutch or the English made inland settlements in Bengal

**The first factories in Bengal.**—It has been said—"There are two side gates in the East to the great park of English diplomacy The one is commerce, the other is medicine We owe, indeed, our Indian Empire to them"\* The next advance of the British is an illustration of the aptness of this saying, for it was owing to the good offices of one of the Company's doctors, Gabriel Boughton, that special trade privileges were obtained from the Viceroy of Bengal, Prince Shah Shuja, second son of the Emperor Shah

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\* J W Kaye, *Life of Sir John Malcolm* (1856)

Jahan Boughton had won favour by curing one of the ladies of the household of the Viceroy [Mir Jumla according to Bowrey (1669 70) and Shah Shuja according to Stewart's History] and was attached as a surgeon to the court at Rajmahal. The British had been anxious to set up a factory at Hooghly but apparently the readmission of the Portuguese there had made them abandon this plan. They now had a friend at court and accordingly in December 1650, despatched James Bridgeman and two assistants with orders to proceed to Hooghly and then to Rajmahal where the services of Boughton were to be enlisted.

They were instructed to endeavour that, according to Mr Boughton's promise the Company may have such a *farman* granted as may outstrip the Dutch in point of privilege and freedom that so they may not have cause any longer to boast of theirs. The hope was expressed also that Mr Boughton will be very faithful in the business and strive that the same may be procured with as little charge as may be to the Company. A similar dictate of economy was the charge that the Company was not to be put to any unnecessary expense by building, or repairing

houses or by keeping many servants Bough-ton proved faithful in the business and a *farman*, or order, was obtained by which, Bowrey proudly claimed, the British had “ freedom of inhabiting and trading free from all manner of taxes and customs in and out, the like privileges hath no other nation besides ”

As a result of this concession, a factory was opened at Hooghly in 1651 and shortly afterwards two others were established at Cossimbazar and Patna. It should be explained here that a small tariff duty of 4 per cent *ad valorem* was levied on all imports and exports, while transit duties were imposed on inland trade the latter however did not affect the Company, which was confined to overseas trade

**Organization of factories.**—Hooghly was the head agency in Bengal until 1676, when it was made subordinate to Madras, the title of the Agent in charge being changed to that of Chief of the Factories in the Bay. For some time it was debated whether Hooghly or Balasore should be the headquarters, but the question was decided

in favour of Hooghly Sea going vessels loaded and unloaded in the roadstead off Balasore from which their cargoes were taken up in boats owing to the difficulties of navigating the Hooghly river but its claims were secondary to those of Hooghly which was described as the key of Bengal where all goods pass in and out to and from all parts In 1681 the Bengal factories were again made independent of Madras and placed under an Agent and Governor of the Factories in the Bay of Bengal By this time a factory had been set up at Malda and there was also an out station at Rajmahal where bullion was sent to be coined at the Mughal mint.

Cossimbazar was the most important factory from the point of view of trade out of a total of £230 000 sent in one year for investment in Bengal £140 000 were assigned to it while Balasore received £32 000 Dacca £16 500 Malda £15 000 Patna £14 500 and Hooghly £12 000 Hooghly as was natural had a larger staff than the subordinate factories It had a council of four members under the Chief a minister surgeon secretary and steward—in all nine men which cannot be regarded as an

extravagant establishment The Chief at first received pay of £100, but this was raised to £200 a year, in addition to a gratuity of £100 a year, the pay of the members of council ranged from £20 to £40 only a year Their emoluments, however, were not limited to these exiguous stipends, for they were allowed the privilege of private trade on their own account, and many had a profitable business

## CHAPTER II

### The Company's Early Struggles

**Competition of other nations** — A bare recital of dates is in itself indicative of the eager competition for the trade of the East which set in among the great mercantile nations of northern Europe in the beginning of the seventeenth century. The first English East India Company, as already stated, received a royal charter in 1600. Two years later all the companies in the Netherlands which carried on trade with the East were merged in one great association, the Netherlands East India Company. In 1604 the first French East India Company was established, and in 1612 a similar company was formed by the Danes.

**The Portuguese** — All came into the field a century after the Portuguese, who had a monopoly of the trade with the East up to the end of the sixteenth century. Their power then began to wane, largely as a result of the union of Portugal with Spain in 1580. Its subjection to the Spanish Crown had a

disastrous influence. It sent a strong contingent to the great Armada, the destruction of which shattered its naval power. After 1594 its commerce was preyed on by the Dutch owing to the action of Philip II in closing against them the port of Lisbon, which was the emporium of the eastern trade. Unable to attack Spain by land the Dutch began to cut off its feeders along the sea routes. Portugal was now approaching a state of exhaustion. A small nation, it had succeeded by heroic efforts in founding an overseas empire the maintenance of this empire against attack was a strain too great for its strength. Its man-power began to fail and it was driven to send drafts from the jails to reinforce its settlements. The Portuguese were unable to maintain the unequal struggle, and their trade in the East, with many of their possessions, passed to the Dutch.

Apart from the question of naval power, the Portuguese system had inherent defects. Their settlements were not formed or inspired by the mercantile enterprise of private companies. They were royal factories governed by royal officers. Their object was not merely



to promote trade but also to spread Christianity if necessary at the point of the sword, and propaganda of this kind did not ingratiate them with the people or the Mughal Government. Another cause of offence was their arrogation of the rights of sovereignty on the strength of naval power as early as 1601 the King of Portugal took to himself the title of Lord of Navigation Conquest and Commerce of Ethiopia Arabia Persia and India

Piracy and slave raids in the Bay of Bengal still further enraged the Mughal Government which came to the conclusion that the Portuguese had gone beyond the limits of tolerance. Drastic punishment followed. Hooghly was taken and the Portuguese deported from it in 1632. Though subsequently readmitted to the town their fall from power was as complete as it was rapid. Support from Portugal was lacking and they never regained their predominance in trade.

The Portuguese trade dependent as it was on their naval power was based on the ports of Hooghly Piply and Chittagong and they did not make a settlement inland except at Hooghly a great river port with access to the sea. To these ports goods were brought for

shipment, from them imports were sent far inland Hughes and Parker found, when they went to Patna in 1620, that the Portuguese came up there "with their frigates from the bottom of Bengal," where, it was explained, they had the ports of Hooghly and Piply. In Eastern Bengal the Portuguese extended their arms to the islands on the coast Here they degenerated into buccaneers and slave-traders with the influx of adventurers, escaped convicts, and masterless men who did not acknowledge the authority of the royal officers

The island of Sandwip was taken by them in 1602 and for many years a ruthless warfare was waged between them and the Arakanese, who in 1607 massacred the Portuguese residing at Dianga near Chittagong to the number of 600 A Muhammadan in the service of the Portuguese also rose against them, took Sandwip, massacred the Portuguese and Indian Christians on the island and is said to have had his banners inscribed with the ferocious scroll "Fateh Khan, by the grace of God, Lord of Sandwip, shedder of Christian blood and destroyer of the Portuguese nation" He was, in his turn, killed by the Portuguese, who retook Sandwip

in 1600 and held it under the rule of an adventurer named Gonzales. An expedition for the conquest of Arakan in which he joined with a force sent by the Viceroy of Goa having ended in failure the king of Arakan retaliated by an attack on Sandwip which he took with other islands off the coast in 1616 and retained for 50 years. Portuguese pirates however continued to make Chittagong their headquarters till 1666 when it was taken by Shaista Khan and they were finally expelled.

**The Dutch** — The most formidable rivals of the English were the Dutch in fact the latter long had the advantage and the English lagging behind them followed in their footsteps. The Dutch had the initial advantage of an overseas commerce far exceeding that of the English. Their East India Company consolidated an existing trade according to a contemporary they had already made themselves the common carriers of the world and it was a richer and more powerful association than that formed in London. Not only was its capital more ample but it was backed by the resources of the State. Though

a private company in name, it was practically a national concern, whereas the English company suffered from the *laissez-faire* policy of its Government. It was possessed of much wider powers, for it was authorized to enter into treaties and contracts in the name of the United Netherlands and its Government, to build fortifications and to appoint Governors. It owed its prosperity not less to its negotiations than to conquests and the even flow of trade !

After 1610, moreover, its operations were directed by a Governor-General and Council at Batavia with the advantages of local knowledge and closer contact, while the English company was still subject to the distant control of London. As early as 1634 it was enviously stated that the Dutch ships were never idle, sometimes carrying on trade from port to port and at other times being employed as men-of-war, and as shown in the preceding chapter, the chief anxiety of the English was to procure from the Mughal Government a trade license which would convey greater privileges and freedom than the Dutch possessed.

The commerce of India was far from being the sole aim of the Dutch Company. Its

primary objective was the trade of the eastern archipelago where it sought a monopoly of the trade in spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg pepper and, above all cloves. These, were in constant demand and of great value in Europe, owing to the paucity of green vegetables and of other condiments required for the dietary of those days. The Dutch possessed of handier ships and better seamen than the Portuguese wrested from them the mastery of the eastern seas founded a seat of government at Batavia and extended their trade as far as China and Japan.

After the massacre of its traders at Amboyna in 1623 the English Company relinquished the struggle for commercial ascendancy in the Far East and concentrated on India where however it was long at a disadvantage in its rivalry with the Dutch.

So far as Bengal is concerned the Dutch were confined to the seaboard and the bulk of the foreign trade was in the hands of the Portuguese until the latter were expelled from Hooghly. This gave the Dutch their opportunity to penetrate inland. They set up a trading station at Hooghly but the exactions and oppression of the Mughal authorities forced them to fall back to their base



**The Danes and French** —The rivalry of the Danes was not a serious handicap. They had factories at Balasore and at Gondalpara on the river Hooghly near Chandernagore but they suffered from a chronic shortage of capital and failed to obtain much trade. The competition of the French was also not a serious problem their settlement at Chandernagore being only of minor importance till after the beginning of the eighteenth century.

**The interlopers** —The Company had also to contend against the competition of private merchants called interlopers who defying its claim to a monopoly contemplated the formation of a rival East India Company and were able to carry on trade merely by payment of the customs duties from which the Company itself had received exemption. Their operations were facilitated by the connivance or actual partnership of the Company's own officers who thus committed what the Directors called the treacherous and unprofitable sin of complacency with interlopers. One of the tales laid upon Hedges when he was appointed Agent and Governor in 1681 was to put a stop to the abuses and to arrest and send home Vincent

the Chief of Hooghly, who had been guilty of "odious infidelity"

The chief interloper was Thomas Pitt, grandfather of the Earl of Chatham, who was to end his Indian career as Governor of Madras, where he bought the famous diamond which bears his name. Pitt played a bold hand. Coming out from England in 1682 he gave out that the Company was on the point of dissolution and that he was the Agent of a "New English Company." He made his headquarters at Chinsura, where he was joined by Vincent, and launching out in trade with the co-operation of Dutch and Bengali merchants obtained from the Mughal Faujdar or Commandant of Hooghly a grant of commercial privileges and permission to build a factory.

Hedges indeed managed to get from Shaista Khan, Viceroy of Bengal, a warrant authorising the arrest of interlopers, but it was never executed. The interlopers were on good terms with the local officials and it was represented to Shaista Khan, with perfect truth, that the Company wanted a monopoly, and that the interlopers were also merchants who, unlike the Company, were ready to pay



customs dues. The decision of Shaista Khan was that they should trade freely, and the mournful conclusion of Hedges was that 'the business being thus determined by the Nabob there is no possibility of rooting out or doing any prejudice to the interlopers

**Friction with the Mughal Government —** Throughout nearly the whole of the second half of the seventeenth century the English had constant friction with the Mughal Government and its officers. They relied on the official authorization of their trade given by the *farman*s or orders of the Viceroys of Bengal and the imperial mandates first of Shah Jahan and then of Aurangzeb but in practice the even and regular flow of their trade depended on the good will of subordinate officials. Nominally exempt from the payment of customs duties they were subjected to arbitrary exactions and demands which made this exemption nugatory. Failure to satisfy them led to harassment and interference with trade.

Mr Jumbly who in 1668 succeeded Shah Shuja as Viceroy of Bengal stopped them at Rajmahal as they came down from Patna laden with salt-petre which was then

in great demand in Europe for the manufacture of gunpowder Mir Jumla, however, appears to have been within his rights, for the Mughal Government had made saltpetre an imperial monopoly in 1655 on the ground that the available supply was required for military purposes Export of it was consequently prohibited, but the orders were evaded by means of false declarations or bribes

At Hooghly the Fudjar levied from the Company Rs 8,000 a year in lieu of customs on the plea that Shah Jahan having been deposed, his orders were null and void When in 1661 the Agent had the hardihood to attempt reprisals by seizing a vessel, Mir Jumla ordered immediate reparation and threatened to take the English factories and expel them from the country The Agent, alarmed at the storm which his action had raised, had no alternative but to restore the vessel, apologize for his conduct, and pay the yearly impost of Rs 3,000 After this the English must have established good relations with Mir Jumla, for Bowrey in his *Countries round the Bay of Bengal*, 1669 to 1679, tells us that the English had great cause to lament his death (1664), and eulogized him as "a most indulgent prince

to all ingenuous men and a real lover of the English nation

Very different is the account given of his successor Shaista Khan. Loud and bitter were the complaints of his rapacity and of his oppression of merchants both European and Indian. Despite the fact that he passed a formal order exempting the English trade from customs dues and directed that it should be carried on without let or hindrance it was subject to vexatious imposts and frequent obstructions. A respite was obtained during the brief rule of Muhammad Azim the third son of Aurangzeb (1678-80). The gross enormities according to Bowyer to which both the English and the Dutch had been subjected by Shaista Khan were much amended for the new prince is not such a cruel nor of such a base spirit to contradict what his ancestors freely gave by plenary but hath ordered a better and more legal government. He hath turned out of office all the governors etc. that the English and Dutch complained against and not only so but punished some of them severely to their perpetual memory. And hath given the English and Dutch large plenary and more especially to the English nation. The new

*farman*, which was obtained by Matthias Vincent, the "Chief at the Bay," was said to be "so well penned that there is now a more solid hope for our trade in Bengal than heretofore" and to be "well worth the charge and exceeding pains taken by the Chief in obtaining it."

These hopes were dashed by the return of Shaista Khan for a second term of office (1680—89). When Hedges, the new Agent and Governor, came to Hooghly in 1682 he found trade almost at a standstill owing to the exactions of the customs officers, and it was resolved that the only possible expedient was for him to make a personal appeal to Shaista Khan at Dacca. His departure from Hooghly on this mission was delayed by the seizure of his boats, but at length he managed to make a stealthy escape by night. At Dacca he obtained a number of "specious promises, which were infructuous, for on his return the Company's boats were still stopped and its goods seized, while bribes failed to secure immunity from payment of customs."

**Rupture with the Mughal Government.**—The dispute culminated in 1686, when the

Company's boats were held up under a general embargo and its sale of silver was prohibited. Charnock who had been appointed Agent had great difficulty in getting away from Cossimbazar. A decree for Rs 43 000 had been passed in satisfaction of a claim made by some merchants dealing with the factory. Payment being refused and a summons to Charnock to appear before the Nawab at Dacca being disregarded, the factory was invested by troops. Charnock however succeeded in making his way through the cordon and reached Hooghly to find that the Company had resolved on war with the Nawab. This radical change of policy requires explanation.

The Company had long been endeavouring to carry on trade on the strength of the guarantees contained in the licenses or charters obtained from the imperial court and the Viceroys of Bengal only to find that they were observed mainly in the breach. Macaulay has said that till the advent of Clive his countrymen were despised as mere peddlars and this was certainly the low view of them held by Shaista Khan who is reported by Hedges to have stigmatized the English as a company of base quarrelling people.

and foul dealers"—an allusion in part to the Company's quarrel with the interlopers. A breach of pledges and agreements could only be followed by protests backed by no force. Trade was precarious and there was no security for the factories.

Matters came to such an impasse that Hedges in 1683 recommended the abandonment of the inland stations and the establishment of a fortified settlement at the mouth of the Hooghly. "The Company's affairs," he said, "will never be better but always grow worse till they resolve to quarrel with these people and build a fort on the island of Saugor at the mouth of this river." The same suggestion was made by others but was not entertained by the Court of Committees, as the Company's board of control in England was called. The Court was inclined to favour an expedient recommended by others, *viz*, the seizure of Chittagong, which it was believed could be surprised by an expedition of two ships with two or three sloops.

The Court came to the conclusion that the only means of securing the Company's position was to adopt the policy of the Dutch in the Further East, where trade was supported

by armed force " Since " it wrote, " those Governors have got the knack of trampling upon us and extorting what they please of our estate from us by the besieging of our factories and stopping of our boats upon the Ganges they will never forbear doing so till we have made them as sensible of our power as we have of our truth and justice " Again The increase of our revenue is the subject of our care as much as our trade tis that must maintain our force when twenty accidents may interrupt our trade tis that must make us a nation in India Without that we are but as a great number of interlopers united by His Majesty's Royal Charter fit only to trade where nobody of power thinks it their interest to prevent us And upon this account it is that the wise Dutch in all their general advices which we have seen write ten paragraphs concerning their government their civil and military policy warfare and the increase of their revenue for one paragraph they write concerning trade "

This new forward policy was inspired by Sir Josiah Child who had obtained a dominating voice in the councils of the Company in England At first sight it might appear from the passages quoted that the policy was

one of territorial conquest It is clear, however, from other despatches that the Court's aim was security and not sovereignty It would, they declared, be an excellent plan "to have one fort in every prince's dominion with whose subjects we trade, to be under the protection of our own laws and guns. Till we can arrive at this, our station is but precarious, and we build but with untempered mortar in comparison with those master builders, the Dutch,<sup>1</sup> who are the mirrors of the East India policy "

It is true that this was the policy of the mailed fist, but the objective was limited According to a despatch of 1687, they were merely resolved to prosecute war with the Mughal till they had a fortified settlement in Bengal It would further appear, from a petition presented to Parliament in 1691, that the whole question was mixed up with the encroachments of the interlopers It was complained that interlopers styling themselves the New Company, had their flag carried before them at Hooghly and purchased a *farman*, which prejudiced the Company The Indian officials took advantage of the dissension to extort large



sums of money and denied the ancient privileges of the Company, satisfaction was sought at the Mughal Court but in vain

**War with the Mughal Government** —The plan of campaign which was resolved upon by the Court of Committees in England was to send out a strong fleet on the arrival of which an ultimatum was to be sent to the Nawab of Bengal. In the event of his not complying with the demands made upon him the fleet was to proceed to Chittagong which after its capture was to be fortified and placed under Charnock as Governor. In the end only three men of war with as many frigates, reached Bengal under Captain Nicholson. The Nawab ordered 300 horse and 3 000 foot to protect Hooghly and the supply of provisions to the English was stopped. An affray in the market ended in a general fight of which the English had the better. After a great part of Hooghly had been burnt down the Faujdar or Commandant asked for an armistice to which Charnock readily agreed for he could not have maintained his position against the forces which were hourly expected and he was anxious to carry away a large store of calicoes. Negotiations

were opened with the Nawab, which proved infructuous. Approaches made to a zamindar of Hijili on the sea-board of the Midnapore district, who was in rebellion against the Nawab, bore better fruit, for he invited the British to erect factories at Hijili and promised them his assistance.

At the end of 1686 the British evacuated Hooghly and dropped down the river to Sutanuti, a village which was destined to develop into the metropolis of Calcutta. Here a halt was made, temporary shelters were erected and negotiations with the Nawab renewed. Twelve articles were formulated embodying the British demands and sent to him for acceptance. He in the meantime had seized the factory at Patna and destroyed that at Malda. His response to the British demands was the despatch of an overwhelming force, which had orders to clear them out of the country. Charnock, seeing the country was up in arms, decided to hold out at Hijili and make as heavy reprisals as he could on the way. The fort of Tanna (which stood on the site of the present Botanic Gardens at Sibpur near Calcutta) was stormed and demolished, the Mughal granaries and salt depôts on the Hooghly were destroyed, all the

vessels that were met were captured and a raid was made on Balasore which was sacked.

At Hujli Charnock held out for over three months against a force of 12 000 men which invested the place and the even more deadly attacks of malaria. In June a small reinforcement of 70 men reached him after he had buried two hundred of his men and only one hundred were fit to fight. By a simple ruse he deceived the enemy into thinking that he had a constant supply of reinforcements men being quietly sent out of the fort and brought back in a body as if they were new arrivals with colours flying trumpets sounding and drums beating. The Mughal commander lost heart and entered into an agreement by which the British were allowed to leave with the honours of war and he for his part promised to procure the Nawab's assent to the twelve articles already sent to him. Charnock and his little band then moved on to Uluberia in the Howrah district which it was then thought might develop into a famous and well governed colony. Permission was indeed given by the Nawab to the British to make a settlement there and to retain their factories at Hujli but Charnock and his Council declined their offers and chose to

the conclusion that Sutanuti was the " best and fittest up the river on the Main " for a settlement Accordingly in September 1687, Charnock and his little band again came to Sutanuti, with the permission of the Mughal authorities, and set to work to make what he hoped would be a permanent settlement

**Heath's expedition.**—Though the first attempt to give effect to their new policy had been a miserable fiasco, the Court of Committees did not abandon it They saw no hope of any improvement under the system of " fenceless factories," as a result of which, they complained they had been robbed of half their stock Accordingly they announced to Charnock " We are peremptorily resolved never to send any of our estate again into Bengal until we know you are well settled and fortified in some strong place of our own with an English garrison " The former plan of capturing Chittagong was adhered to, and a fleet of ten vessels was despatched under Captain Heath, who was made a plenipotentiary in supersession of Charnock

Heath was an unfortunate choice, for he was, as Wilson says in the *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, rapid in everything,

even in changing his mind. By the time he arrived Shaista Khan the old enemy of the British had been succeeded by Bahadur Khan and Heath hearing that he contemplated a war against the King of Arakan gave up the idea of an attack on Chittagong and wrote offering his assistance as a price for the confirmation of the old privileges and permission for a fortified settlement. He then reverted to the original plan and taking off the British survivors from Sutanuti set sail for Chittagong in November 1688 sacking Balasore *en route* and capturing two French frigates that were met in the roads.

He arrived off Chittagong in January 1689 to find it defended by an army of 10 000 men against whom he could only muster 300 soldiers. An attack on the town was out of the question and Heath proceeded to offer his services to the King of Arakan. His overtures were however coldly received and his men being incapacitated by scurvy Heath abandoned the expedition and left for Madras where Charnock and his companions waited for fifteen weary months before they could return to Bengal. The grand scheme of the Court thus ended in a fruitless and a long expedition.

**Foundation of Calcutta.**—When the war first began, Aurangzeb, engrossed by his great wars in Southern India treated it with mild contempt, and merely called for a map, it is said, to see where Hooghly and Balasore were situated. Furious at the subsequent exploits of the British, he ordered their extirpation but eventually granted them a general pardon in 1690 on their making a humble submission and promising to pay a fine of Rs 1,50 000. He doubtless realized that he had no fleet with which the coast and estuaries could be blockaded against them, while the stoppage of trade meant loss to the exchequer. Permission to settle at Sutanuti and to trade on payment of an annual charge of Rs 3,000, in lieu of customs, having been granted by the new Governor of Bengal, Ibrahim Khan, Charnock and his factors set forth from Madras, with a guard of 30 soldiers, and arriving at Sutanuti for the third time in August 1690, set to work to repair the ravages of war, for all the buildings they had erected had been destroyed and the place was in a deplorable condition.

The infant settlement was destined to develop into the great city of Calcutta, but to all appearance a more unpromising site

could not have been selected. It consisted of a narrow strip of bank along the river bank inland stretched uncleared jungle brackish lagoons and fever haunted swamps. Malaria was an invidious and ever present enemy, and the early years of the settlement were a dismal record of death and disease. Charnock however had learnt from bitter experience the precariousness of trading stations planted in the midst of populous cities which were exposed to outbursts of hostility or caprice from local governors and their underlings. At Calcutta the British could be more secure from molestation. At it the river borne trade of Eastern Bengal as well as of the Ganges could be tapped from it imports from Europe could be distributed. It had the natural protection of the river Hooghly on the west and of a barrier of morasses on the east. Lastly it enabled the British to make use of their sea power for it stood at a point which could be reached by their foreign vessel.

**First fortifications** — In spite of a terrible mortality the new settlement drew a few Indian Portuguese and Armenians to it. The British however had no air

ed as yet their chief object, *viz*, permission for a fortified post Their opportunity came in 1696 with a rebellion against the Mughal Government, which threatened the existence of their new settlement Subha Singh, a great landlord of Midnapore, rose in revolt and entered into a league with Rahim Khan, an Afghan magnate of Orissa The rebels overran the country as far as the western bank of the Hooghly and captured Murshidabad, Cossimbazar, Rajmahal, Malda and Hooghly itself They beset the fort of Tanna opposite Calcutta, but the British sent a vessel to assist the garrison and the insurgents were forced to retreat, but not before one party had set fire to the villages near Calcutta

In fear for the safety of their settlement the British applied to Ibrahim Khan for leave to fortify it, and being told in general terms that they might defend themselves, began to build a fort which was named Fort William after the reigning King, William III The rebellion was quelled next year by Prince Azim-us-shan, grandson of Aurangzeb, who had been appointed Viceroy of Bengal on the recall of the weak Ibrahim Khan and mercilessly hunted down



the rebels. Next year (1698) the British were allowed by him to purchase the three villages of Calcutta, Gobindpur and Sutanuti and thus acquired a definite status as landlords paying revenue to the Mughal Government.

**The constitution of the East India Company** —The management of the affairs of the East India Company was vested in two bodies, viz. the Proprietors and the Directors, each meeting in courts and hence known as the Court of Proprietors and Court of Directors. The latter was known as the Court of Committees till 1698. The Court of Proprietors which consisted of persons holding £500 of stock was the ultimate authority. The Directors, 24 in number, were elected by the Proprietors annually from among persons holding £2000 of stock; they corresponded to a managing committee and were liable to be overruled by the Court of Proprietors.

In India the Company's settlements which were somewhat like the trading ports in China, were grouped in Presidencies which were so called because they were administered by a President and Council.

Bengal went by the name of the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal. The Council consisted of 12 to 16 members, and decisions were arrived at by a vote of the majority. There was a regular gradation of the Company's servants according to seniority, *viz*, beginning from the bottom, writers, factors, senior factors, and merchants.

## CHAPTER III

### The Government and People in the Seventeenth Century

**General Conditions**—The Muhammadan histories on whom we are mainly dependent for knowledge of the state of the country in the seventeenth century suffer from the defect that they are for the most part chronicles of the rulers and not records of social and economic conditions. Their pages are annals of the courts and not of the poor; they are overloaded with a mass of personal detail and concentrate attention on battles and murders, privy conspiracies and rebellions, rather than on the state of the people and the development of the country. The defect is to some extent remedied by the accounts of travellers, and these leave on the whole a gloomy impression.

Ralph Fitch in 1586 found the country between Benares and Patna infested by nomadic bands of robbers, and when he travelled from Cooch Behar to Hooghly, he had to go through a wilderness because the right or direct way was full of thieves. The country round Gaur was desolate; he found

“ few villages but almost all wilderness, with many buffes (buffaloes), swine and deer, grass longer than a man, and very many tigers ” In the south-east of Bengal the people were all rebels against Akbar, who had not yet consolidated his rule, while the king of Tippera and the Maghs or Arakanese waged almost continual war

At the same time trade flourished on the coast and inland waterways Patna was an emporium for raw and manufactured cotton, opium and sugar The sea-port of Hujli, in the Midnapore district, was frequented by shipping from other parts of India, Sumatra, Malacca and elsewhere, which took away cargoes of rice, cotton cloth, sugar, pepper, etc Eastern Bengal then, as now, was a great rice granary, and the Dacca district produced the best and finest cotton fabrics in all India “ Great store,” said Fitch, “ of cotton cloth goeth from hence and much rice, wherewith they serve all India, Ceylon, Pegu, Malacca, Sumatra and many other places ” Sir Thomas Roe (1615-18) also noted that Bengal, in which he included the modern Bihar, fed northern India with wheat and rice, while the remark of Bruton (1633), that the people of Bengal were “ notable,

ingenious men, let it be in what art or science soever," bespeak industrial skill and activity

The even flow of trade must however have been obstructed by maladministration Sir Thomas Roe writing to the Chaplain of Surat in 1616 pithily described conditions under the rule of Jahangir — ' Religions infinite, laws none In this confusion what can be expected? With this general sketch may be compared the picture of local oppression drawn in the introduction to his poem *Chandi* by Mukunda Ram or Kavikankan who was forced to fly from his home in the Burdwan district and take refuge under a Hindu chief in Midnapore Rural trade was strangled the coinage was debased the lands lay uncultivated but taxes were still exacted revenue and rents were screwed up to a high figure in default of payment land lords and tenants were seized beaten and thrown into prison This may of course have been an individual and not a general experience but we know from other sources that it was the rule for local oppression to be the result of local irresponsibility

Peter Mundy's account of his journey to and stay at Patna in 1632 is eloquent of the

disturbed condition of the country Transport of goods, whether by land or river, was dangerous, for "this country (as all the rest of India) swarms with rebels and thieves" They received short shrift from Abdulla Khan Viceroy of Bihar from 1632 to 1643, whose practice it was to behead them and imbed their heads in masonry pillars, called *minars*, which were set up by the roadside On his journey, Mundy saw in the Cawnpore district "above 200 'munaries' with heads mortared and plastered in, leaving out nothing but their very face, some 30, some 40, some more, some less This was Abdulla Khan's exploit (who is now Governor of Puttana) by the king's order For this way was so pestered with rebels and thieves, that there was no passing, so that the king sent Abdulla Khan with 12,000 horse and 20,000 foot to suppress them, who destroyed all their towns, took all their goods, their wives and children for slaves and the chiefest of their men, causing their heads to be cut off and to be immortared "

Abdulla Khan was a rigid Muhammadan  
 γ As Mundy drew near to Patna he found that no liquor could be had for love or money owing to the strict prohibition law—"death to the

party and destruction to that house where it shall be found. At Patna itself the Hindus were not allowed to cremate their dead but had to perform the last rites at Hajipur on the opposite bank of the Ganges.

An equally gruesome account of Abdulla Khan's cruelty and fanaticism is given by the Muhammadan author of the *Maasir ul Umara*. He tells us that Abdulla Khan, being asked how many infidels i.e. he had beheaded replied 200 000. His interlocutor suggested that at least one innocent Muhammadan must have been among the number. Abdulla Khan angrily retorted that he had also made prisoners of 500 000 men and women and sold them as slaves. All had become Muhammadans and their descendants would number crores all followers of Islam.

The same work also mentions his characteristic treatment of a Rajput Raja who was an ancestor of the Dumraon family in Shahabad. The Raja having rebelled his fort was sacked. He came as a suppliant before Abdulla Khan dressed only in a *lungi* or waist cloth bringing his wife with him. Abdulla Khan referred his case to the

Emperor, who ordered him to put the scoundrel to death and take possession of his wife and property. His estate was divided among Abdulla Khan's followers, his widow was made a Muhammadan and married to his grandson.

In spite of Abdulla Khan's cruelty and tyranny we are assured that his service was popular. It was well paid, but it had its risks, for soldiers who fell out during forced marches were beheaded by the rear guard. The superstitious even believed that he could work miracles and made offerings to him, the propitiation of maleficent powers is more popular in India than the adoration of benevolent deities.

The account of Bengal written in Spanish by Manrique a Portuguese missionary, who visited it in 1636 and 1640-41, exhibits on the one hand a fertile country with a rich trade and on the other a people oppressed and cowed. "All the kingdoms of Bengala are much visited and resorted to by many foreigners on account of the great traffic which is carried on in foodstuffs and also in very precious cloth." Dacca was "a great resort of various foreign nations attracted thither by its immense trade and traffic in a great



variety of articles the exuberant produce of its fertile and luxuriant fields "

The abuses of administration are apparent from his remarks " In order to keep the people better under their sway and tyranny, the Nababos enhance the rents which they collect five or six months in advance because the time of their government is limited and at the mercy of the Padcha When they least expect it the Padcha changes them, either to raise them to higher positions or to deprive them of their power For this reason do the Nababos take the rents in advance and as a rule through violent means and if the poor natives are unable to pay they take their wives and sons as slaves and sell them at public auction if they are heathen "

The effects of oppression were manifest in the cowed spirit of the people " The Bengalis are more inclined to be servants than masters Hence they become easily accustomed to captivity and slavery If you want them to serve you well you must treat them with more severity than kindness This is so true that among themselves they say by

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\* *Palme Major & Frayre* Marquis de Pombal Translated by the Rev. J. Carlisle, S. J., Bengal Asiatic Society, 1816

way of proverb *Mare Tacur, na mare Cucur*, which, in our language, means 'Whoever beats us is a master, whoever spares us is a dog' With this the curious reader will be able to form an idea of the character of the nation "

Misgovernment continued in the second half of the seventeenth century Numerous examples of oppression during the rule of Shaista Khan are given in the English records Job Charnock in 1678 declared "The whole kingdom is lying in a very miserable feeble condition, the great ones plundering the feeble" Walter Clavell, again, who was appointed Chief at the Bay in 1672, tells us that at Hooghly "the Nabob's officers oppress the people monopolize most commodities, even as low as grass for beasts, canes, firewood, thatch, etc Whatever they do, when complained of to Dacca, is palliated under the name and colour of the Nabob's interest" Shaista Khan himself is represented as insatiable in greed, and is credited with amassing a fortune of 38 crores of rupees According to Streynsham Master, he was "every day more covetous than other, so that to relate the many ways that are continually invented by his Duan," i.e., Diwan, "and his Governors to bring

money into his coffers would be as endless as admirable, both for their wit and cruelty'

On the other hand Shaista Khan is extolled by Muhammadan historians as distinguished alike in the arts of war and peace His governorship has been described as a brilliant chapter in the Mughal annals of Bengal As a proof of the unique prosperity of the people it is related that rice at Dacca sold for two annas a maund it is a mystery how it could have paid the cultivator to reap and carry his crop to market at this low price According moreover, to a contemporary historian Shaista Khan abolished the monopolies of all articles of food and clothing and other things which former Governors had exercised and also did away with the vexatious imposts levied on merchants and travellers at the rate of 2½ per cent of income (*zakat*) and the taxes (*hasid*) on both artificers and tradesmen The writer adds — As Sadi has said 'At first oppression & bias was small but every succeeding generation increased it till at last in all provinces especially in Bengal it reached such a stage that merchant gave up their business and householders went into exile This creditable as it is to

Shaista Khan, throws into darker relief the avaricious policy of other Governors

**Trade.**—Trade was hampered by transit duties which were subject to sudden and arbitrary enhancement, as, for instance, on the appointment of a new Viceroy In Orissa they were at one time reduced by three-fourths but were soon raised again to the old level, with the result that merchants refused altogether to transport their goods Another handicap to trade was the levy of forced contributions by the Nawabs, of which an extraordinary instance is given in a Dutch narrative quoted by Mr Moreland in *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*

Mir Jumla, it is related, demanded Rs 50,000 from the grain merchants of Dacca on the ground that they had made twice as much owing to the presence of his large camp The grain merchants offered Rs 10,000 They were then mercilessly beaten with whips to bring them to their senses As they were still obdurate, their two leaders were seized and thrown in front of elephants Then at length, to save them from being trampled to death, the grain merchants compromised by paying Rs 25,000

It is not surprising that after this the bankers of the city paid Rs 3,00,000 without coercive measures being necessary. We may agree with the dry remark of Mr Moreland—"It is I think fair to conclude from such occurrences that industrial or distributive enterprise must have been seriously discouraged by the risk that novel demands might be imposed in the event of any profitable development of business."

Bowrey (1669—79) mentions similar forced levies by the Governors of Orissa whose revenues and exactions were he said incredible. They were frequently changed—five held office between 1669 and 1679—and each was bent on making a fortune. The Hindu merchants and brokers were their special prey. When Bowrey was at Balasore in 1674 a newly appointed Nawab came there and proceeded to bleed the traders for no other reason but that he wanted a great sum of money to welcome him into the place. His demands were Rs 20 000 Rs 30 000 Rs 40 000 and Rs 50 000 according to their means which his spies had already found out. The chief merchant of the place whose name of Khemchand is handed down to us in the curious form of Chum Chum was called on to pay Rs 1 00 000,

but was let off with half that amount. Chim Cham had already had the misfortune to be mulcted two years previously of Rs 30,000 by the Faujdar or Commandant of Cuttack, who kept him a prisoner till his demand was satisfied.

The Nawab even tried to levy Rs 2,00,000 from the chief wife of his predecessor, who was on the way to join her husband at Dacca with an escort of 1,000 men. In her the Nawab caught a Tartar. "She, being a most undaunted, courageous lady, alarms all her foot and horse, set them in battle array, mounted one of her husband's war elephants and sends him word that she would one hour hence come close by his own tents, and if he wanted any of her moneys it were his best way to demand it then." The Nawab, on receiving this message from that "most mannish woman," hastily beat a retreat.

There seems to be no doubt, however, that the foreign trade of Bengal managed to flourish in spite of exactions and maladministration, and that it developed largely after 1750 owing to the establishment of Dutch and English factories at Hooghly and Patna. A similar phenomenon is observable at the present time in China where, in spite of

internal disorder, brigandage by land and piracy by water foreign trade flourishes to such an extent that the customs figures for 1022 were in excess of all previous records. The Mughals took care not to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs though they plucked its feathers. There was a valuable export trade the very fact that so many European nations were anxious to tap it is proof of its value. Bernier's account is also testimony to the richness and fertility of Bengal. Bengal is as it were the general magazine not only for Hindustan or the empire of the great Mughal but also for all the circumjacent kingdoms and for Europe itself. Bengal abounds with every necessary of life.

**Pirate raids and slavery** —The insecurity of inland transport was overcome by means of armed caravans and well armed fleets of boats along the rivers. At sea piracy was rife. The Mughals had not learnt the lesson taught by Bacon that "To be master of the sea is an abridgement of a monarchy." The wealth of both Indies seems in great part but an accessory to the command of the sea. The sea board was exposed to attack and

Bernier relates that Portuguese pirates from Chittagong "scoured the neighbouring seas in light galleys, entered the numerous arms and branches of the Ganges, ravaged the islands of lower Bengal, and often penetrating 40 or 50 leagues up the country surprised and carried away the entire population of villages. The marauders made slaves of their unhappy captives and burnt whatever could not be removed. It is owing to these repeated depredations that we see so many fine islands at the mouth of the Ganges, formerly thickly peopled, now entirely deserted by human beings and become the desolate lair of tigers and other wild beasts. These scoundrels in Chittagong depopulated and ruined the whole of lower Bengal."

The Portuguese corsairs were sometimes in league with, and sometimes mercenaries of, the Arakanese or Maghs, of whose ravages a contemporary Muhammadan historian (Shihab-ud-din Talish) gives a vivid description. "From the reign of the Emperor Akbar when Bengal was annexed to the Mughal empire, to the time of the conquest of Chittagong during the viceroyalty of Shaista Khan, Arakan pirates, both Magh and Firinghi (i.e., Portuguese), used constantly to come by the



water route and plunder Bengal. They carried off the Hindus and Muslims, male and female great and small few and many, that they could seize. Bengal daily became more and more desolate less and less able to resist and fight them. Not a householder was left on both sides of the river on their track from Dacca to Chittagong. Matters came to such a pass that the Governor of Dacca confined his energies to the defence of that city and the prevention of the coming of the pirate fleet to Dacca.

It may well be asked what the Mughal *navara* or fleet was doing. It had its headquarters at Dacca but it was powerless against the corsairs. Shihab ud din Talish goes on to say— 'The sailors of the Bengal flotilla were in such a fright that I may say without exaggeration whenever 100 warships of Bengal sighted four ships of the enemy if the distance separating them was great the Bengal crews showed fight by flight considered it a great victory that they had carried off their lives in safety and became famous in Bengal for their valour and heroism. If the interval was small and the enemy overpowered them the men of the Bengal ships—rowers, sepoys and armed men alike—threw

themselves without delay into the water, preferring drowning to captivity " The fort at Tanna on the river Hooghly nearly opposite the modern Calcutta was built to check the incursions of these pirates, and we learn from Streynsham Master (1676) that ten or twelve years before they had carried off the people of the riverside villages to their slave market at Pipli, in consequence of which no one dared live lower down the river

The necessity of destroying this nest of pirates was at length realized and Chittagong was captured by Shaista Khan in 1666, the Portuguese there being deported to Dacca This however did not stop the raids of the Arakanese In 1687 the Company's Court of Directors declared that they did not fear anything the Mughal government could do at Chittagong " while we have the Raccaners to friend and can let their war boats loose to prey on the Moors in all parts of the Ganges " It is on record that in 1717, in one month alone, the Maghs carried off 1,800 persons from the south of Bengal to Arakan, where the king kept those that were artisans, and sold the rest as slaves at prices varying from Rs 20 to Rs. 70

**The Viceroy and their powers** —When Bengal, Bihar and Orissa were annexed to the Mughal empire they were placed under a single Viceroy but after a few years a separate Viceroy was appointed for Bihar the Viceroyalty of which was frequently a stepping stone to the more responsible office in Bengal. The Viceroyalty of Bengal was particularly sought after and was several times given to members or connections of the imperial house *e.g.* Shah Shuja son of Shah Jahan Ibrahim Khan and Asaf Khan both brothers of the empress Nur Jahan and Shaista Khan uncle of Aurangzeb. Orissa was for some short periods under independent Viceroys but for the most part was administered by Governors subordinate to the Viceroy of Bengal. The Viceroys held office at the pleasure of the Emperor and were frequently recalled either for maladministration for failure to check rebellion or to remit the full imperial revenue or for fear of aggrandisement and independence. The frequent changes naturally prevented continuity of policy and cannot but have impaired the standard of administration in a country where a long rule is commonly a strong rule.

The system of government was designed to prevent distant pro-consuls arrogating too much power. It was based on the dual control of two officers called the Nazim or Nawab Nazim and the Diwan. The Nazim, described in these pages as the Viceroy, was the executive and military head of the administration, responsible for the maintenance of law and order, the prevention of insurrection and the defence of the frontiers, as well as for the administration of justice except in cases relating to land. The Diwan, was a Finance Minister, he was responsible for the fiscal administration, *i e*, for the collection of revenue and the provision of funds for the public services, he also occasionally administered justice in cases in which the right to land was at issue. Nominally at least he was directly subordinate to the Emperor and not to the Nazim. The two were instructed to consult with one another on all important matters and to co-operate in emergencies in accordance with the imperial regulations. These regulations were embodied in a comprehensive code of procedure, called the *Dastur-ul-Amal*, which contained rules on all important revenue and administrative questions. It was issued

after it had received the personal approval of the Emperor whose sanction was also required to any additions or modifications.

It is interesting to note that a similar system of divided authority was adopted in the Dutch and French colonies in both of which an officer was appointed independent of, and in a position to check the Governor. In the French Colonies this was the Intendant, who was a financial officer with certain judicial powers. In the Dutch Colonies he was the Independent Fiscal who was responsible for the administration of justice and was also given control of the accounts of expenditure being held responsible to the Directors of the Dutch East India Company alone.

As a further check on his representatives the Emperor maintained in the provincial capital an intelligence department consisting of two officers who submitted regular reports to him one sending news of the Viceroy's court and the other information of general interest. They were directly responsible to the Emperor and worked independently of one another and their presence must have been a constant source of irritation to the Viceroy.

Some light is perhaps thrown on the working of the system of central control by the account of his experiences given by Graaf, a Dutch doctor, who was sent in 1670 from Ilcoghly to treat the director of the Dutch factory at Patna. He was ordered to make sketches or plans of the cities and castles on the way, and when he was doing so at Monghyr he and his companion were arrested as spies and thrown into prison. The Dutch at Patna interceded with the Governor there, who sent an order for their release. This was disregarded by the Commandant of Monghyr who suspected that they were Portuguese emissaries of the great Maratha Sivaji and had already referred the matter for orders to the Emperor himself. A second peremptory order from the Governor, however, secured their release.

Mr Oaten makes an interesting commentary on this affair in his monograph on *European Travellers in India*. "The governor of a small frontier town consults the Emperor before daring to execute two foreigners caught in the act of flagrant espionage. On being ordered by the Governor of Patna, who was apparently his superior, to give up his captives, he defies him, and only complies on the

receipt of a second demand accompanied by a threat to treat him as a rebel in default of obedience. This, however, seems to have been quite an exceptional case and one may doubt the inference that the extraordinary surveillance which Aurangzeb exercised resulted in a tendency among officials to refer even minor matters to the central power and to disregard the commands of intermediate authorities.

The zamindars or landed classes seem to have been left very much to themselves and to have exercised large seigniorial rights within their estates provided that they paid their revenue and complied with requisitions for troops or supplies. Subject to this proviso some of the more powerful appear to have been practically independent chiefs such as the Raja of Bhojpur in Shahabad district who was credited with having at his call levies of no less than 14 000 horse and 80 000 foot. He took toll from merchants and travellers through his vast estate the British were acutely anxious lest the present which they sent to Farrukhsiyar with Surman's embassy (1714-15) might be seized on their way up-country by his followers—the Eugeues.

(Ujainis) as they were called—and had to buy him off.

**Treatment of Hindus.**—The majority of the zamindars were Hindus, and they and their co-religionists were made to feel that they were an inferior race. Shah Jahan in 1632 directed that all Hindu temples which had recently been erected should be demolished, and a similar ukase was issued by Aurangzeb. An edict of the latter, which is reproduced in the *Muraqat-i-Hasan* (the letters of one Maulana Abul Hasan, who was secretary to the Governors of Orissa from 1655 to 1667), complains of the construction of a Hindu temple in Midnapore and orders that it shall be demolished with others in Orissa from Cuttack to Midnapore, that every idol-house built within the last twelve years shall be destroyed and that no repairs to Hindu shrines shall be allowed.

The *jizya* or poll-tax was imposed on Hindus in 1679, and as a further indignity Hindu zamindars were forbidden to travel about in palanquins and had to use an inferior kind of conveyance. Hindu merchants again were hit in the pocket by preferential custom duties, for they had to pay 5 per cent of the



value of their goods whereas their Muhamadan rivals were let off with 2½ per cent. The worship of Jagannath at Puri was interfered with and the images had several times to be removed to a safe refuge to save them from desecration or destruction. In 1600-10 the cars of the gods were burnt during the Car Festival and worship stopped for eight months. In the middle of the century the temple was looted by an officer of the Governor of Orissa. At its close the latter had the shrine closed.

**Misgovernment in Orissa**—In the disorder caused by the war of succession which followed the death of Shah Jahan the imperial authority temporarily disappeared in Orissa. The Raja of Khurda assumed independence, the Raja of Mayurbhanj plundered the country from Midnapore to Bhandrakhi (in Balasore) and the local chiefs did what they liked. The country had practically to be reconquered by Khan-i-Dauran (1660-63) whose difficulties were increased by the oppressive administration of a Dewan. He reported that the villages had been turned into wilderness by the actions of this official. It was impossible, he informed Aurangzeb, to

describe the distresses of the cultivators, who had to sell their wives and children, and barely succeeded in keeping body and soul together. To add to the miseries of the people, a terrible famine visited Orissa in 1669-70.

**Emoluments of the Viceroy.**—An idea of the magnitude of the emoluments of the Viceroy may be gathered from a conversation which Sir Thomas Roe had with the "Viceroy of Patna" *i.e.*, Patna or Bihar. The Viceroy had the rank of a commander of 5,000 horse and, as such, drew pay at the rate of Rs 10,00,000 a year. Actually, however, he had only to maintain a force of 1,500 cavalry, which cost him Rs 3,00,000 a year, so that he had a net income of Rs 7,00,000 a year. Besides this, he could retain anything which he could make from the taxes after paying the imperial revenue of a crore and a lakh of rupees a year.

Bengal, in spite of its fertility, appears at times to have been actually a drain on the imperial exchequer. The receipts from the *khalsa* or crown lands did not suffice to meet the pay of the Nazim and of the military and civil establishment, and money had sometimes

to be remitted from other provinces to meet the Bengal deficit. It was not till Murshid Kuli Khan had introduced various reforms and reduced the standing army that the revenue could be raised to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  crore of rupees.

**Extent of the Mughal dominions**—The Mughal writ did not run throughout the territories now forming the provinces of Bengal and Bihar and Orissa. Until its capture by the forces of Shaista Khan (1666) Chittagong and the neighbouring country were held by the Arakanese though the Mughals claimed it as part of their dominions. By a legal fiction over which they must have chuckled, the accountants made it a practice to give an assignment on the revenues of Chittagong to any man whose salary they did not wish to pay. The Raja of Tripura was also an independent chief and the present district of Tippera lay outside the sphere of Mughal administration till 1733.

Cooch Behar was supposed to be tributary but its allegiance was uncertain and fluctuating. A rebellion in 1635 had to be crushed by the Governor of Bengal Islam Khan Mashadi and in 1657 taking advantage of the confusion caused by the illness

and expected death of Shah Jahan, when Shah Shuja marched northwards to assert his claims to the throne, the Raja broke out and invaded Rangpur and Kamrup. He failed, however, to make a stand against the army brought up by the Mughals and fled to Bhutan, leaving Cooch Behar to be overrun by them.

Along the sea-coast of Orissa and also in the hilly hinterland Hindu chiefs still held their own, though the Mughal Government was established in all but the less accessible tracts. Chota Nagpur and the Orissa States were still almost *terra incognita* and were known as the Jharkhand, *i e*, the forest land, a vast, unexplored tract stretching from the fort of Rohtasgarh to the borders of Orissa. The interior remained practically untouched except for occasional raids, the fruit of which was the levy of a few of the diamonds found in the rivers. The Raja of Chota Nagpur was made a vassal in the time of Akbar, and when in 1616 he fell into arrears with his tribute, his country was invaded and he was taken a captive to Gwalior, but allowed to return on agreeing to pay the modest tribute of Rs 6,000 a year. Palamau was first invaded in 1641-2 by Shaista Khan, then Viceroy of

Bihar and again in 1643 by Zabardast Khan, but these incursions brought the Mughals nothing more substantial than promises. Every year the stipulated tribute was demanded, and every year the Chero chiefs withheld it and continued their cattle-lifting raids. Eventually an expedition led by Daud Khan, Governor of Bihar took the Palamau forts and subjugated the country in 1660. It was now annexed but the Chero chiefs in the south remained more or less independent.

The Himalayan hill country including Darjeeling and Sikkim was outside the limits of the empire. The revenue from its forest-clad mountains was too meagre to excite cupidity and its inhabitants constituted no political danger.

**Changing capitals** —At the beginning of the century Rajmahal was the capital of Bengal. Gaur which had been the provincial capital for three centuries became more and more unhealthy owing to a change in the course of the Ganges and was finally abandoned in 1575. Tanda in the Malda district then took its place but also had to be left in 1592 as the Ganges receded from it. Rajmahal did not long retain its dignity for in

1608 the Governor, Islam Khan, moved his headquarters to Dacca, which he selected as a central position for the defence of the province against the invasions of the Ahoms of Assam on the north-east, and the piratical raids of the Arakanese and Portuguese on the south. Rajmahal was again made the seat of government by Prince Shah Shuja on his appointment as Governor of Bengal in 1639, but in 1660 the capital was again transferred to Dacca, apparently from military considerations, the Assamese and the Arakanese being still a menace to the security of Bengal. By 1665, when Manucci visited it, Rajmahal had fallen into ruin. He found dilapidated palaces, great fallen mansions, neglected groves and gardens.

## CHAPTER IV

### The last days of Mughal rule

**Murshid Kuli Khan**—The Mughal empire hastened to swift decay after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 and received its death blow from the invasion of Nadir Shah and his sack of Delhi in 1739. During these years while other parts of India suffered from the horrors of war Bengal was immune from invasion and enjoyed internal peace. Elsewhere the administration collapsed but Bengal remained under a strong and stable government.

For this it was indebted to Murshid Kuli Khan whose principle of administration was retrenchment and reform. With him the diarchic system of government disappeared. Appointed Diwan in 1701 he was also vested with the powers of Deputy Nazim in 1707 when the Nawab Nazim Prince Azim us shan left to join in the dynastic struggle which as usual supervened on the Emperor's death. He thus combined full military and

executive power with the control of the financial and revenue administration—an arrangement which received imperial sanction in 1713 on the accession of Farrukhsiyar, who formally appointed him Nawab Nazim

Murshid Kuli Khan (or, as he was also called, Jafar Khan) ruled over Bengal until 1725—a rare continuity of office in those days when Emperor followed Emperor in quick succession, from each of whom the Nawab had to obtain confirmation of his office. So far from assuming independence, his first care was to make Bengal a self-supporting province of the empire. He rigorously reduced military expenditure and cut down the Bengal army to 3,000 cavalry and 4,000 infantry. With this small standing force he was able to prevent invasion, to maintain law and order, and to bring to book refractory zamindars.

Murshid Kuli Khan also introduced a new revenue settlement based on a detailed survey, in which the actual cultivated area and the amount of the produce were ascertained, and payment of the enhanced revenue was sternly enforced by the imprisonment of defaulters. By these means he was able to raise the annual



remittance of revenue to the imperial treasury at Delhi to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  crore of rupees and Bengal ceased to be a drain on the resources of the empire. Acting on the ideas of political economy then current he prohibited the export of grain and prevented cornering by the simple expedient of seizing the stocks of merchants and forcing them to sell. Rice we are assured sold at Murshidabad at the extraordinarily low price of four annas a maund. Murshidabad it should be added was made the capital because of its central position.

There news of all the four quarters of the Subah (province) were easily procurable and like the pupil of the eye it was situated in the centre of the important places.

Himself the son of a Brahman Murshid Kuli Khan had embraced Islam in early youth—he had been sold to a Persian merchant who brought him up as a son—and in his treatment of the Hindu zamindars there are signs of the vindictive cruelty of a persecutor. The imprisonment of Hindu zamindars who defaulted in payment of revenue was aggravated by torture and insults to their religion. For instance if after the usual punishments revenue was not forthcoming, they were dragged through a cess pool of filth which in

derision of Hinduism he called Baikunth, the Hindu's paradise. The usual punishments included the bastinado, hanging up by the feet and the wearing of loose trousers inside which live cats were put. Embezzlement by Hindu collectors of revenue was punished by forcible conversion to Islam.

**Shuja-ud-din Khan, 1725—39.**—One of the first acts of his successor, Shuja-ud-din Khan, also known as Shuja-ud-daula, was to release imprisoned zamindars and to allow them to resume the management of their estates on payment of large *douceurs*. Thanks to these receipts the remittances of revenue to Delhi were kept up to the figure of Rs 1½ crore. The strength of the army had, however, to be raised to 25,000 men. It was not kept idle. The Mughal dominions were extended by the conquest of Tripura (Tippera). Cooch Behar was overrun by a punitive expedition when its Raja showed a tendency to assume independence. Turbulent chiefs in Bihar, such as the Rajas of Bettiah, Bhojpur and Tekari, were made to acknowledge the strong hand of authority by the Governor of Bihar, Ali Vardi Khan, who, in the words of the *Riyazu-s-Salat* subdued

their tracts levied revenue from them to the full and reduced them to thorough subjection. In brief the Mughal rule was firmly established.

The rule of Shuja ud-din Khan was also marked by important administrative changes. Bihar was added to the Bengal satrapy, which was divided into four sub-provinces *tiz* — (1) Bengal proper comprising West and Central Bengal and part of North Bengal (2) Eastern Bengal and the remainder of North Bengal (3) Bihar and (4) Orissa. The first was under the direct administration of the Viceroy himself the others were placed under Governors. Another innovation was the institution of an Executive Council of four members whom Shuja ud din Khan consulted in all important matters of State, the number was reduced to three on the appointment of Ali Vardi Khan as Governor of Bihar.

**Accession of Ali Vardi Khan, 1740 —** Taking advantage of the confusion caused by the invasion of Nadir Shah Shuja ud-din Khan endeavoured to make the post of Nawab-Nazim hereditary by proclaiming his son, Sarfaraz Khan as his successor. Sarfaraz

Khan did, in fact, succeed him without opposition, but within a year he was overthrown by a conspiracy between his Executive Council (the triumvirate as it was called) and Ali Vardi Khan. The latter collected a strong army at Patna, composed mainly of Afghans and Rohillas, and marched on Murshidabad, Sarfaraz Khan was killed in a battle fought at Giria, 22 miles north of Murshidabad, the latter town was sacked and Ali Vardi Khan took over the government.

Retrospective sanction to the revolution was obtained from the Emperor Muhammad Shah, who is said to have burst into tears on hearing of it and to have exclaimed—"Owing to Nadir Shah my empire has been shattered." Though he had carved his way to power, Ali Vardi Khan was not in a position to dispense with imperial recognition. He used the great treasure left by Sarfaraz Khan to good purpose, sending the Emperor a present of 40 lakhs in addition to the revenue, and was formally appointed Nawab Nazim of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. He then proceeded to recoup himself by exacting from the zamindars double their regular land revenue. This appears to have been his last acknowledgment of the Emperor.

as his overlord, if we except an appeal for help which he made during the Maratha invasions. Remittances of revenue to Delhi ceased. Ali Vardi Khan became to all intents and purposes an independent king.

**Maratha invasions** —For the next twelve years Ali Vardi Khan was engaged in constant warfare against the Marathas from without and rebels from within and sometimes against combinations of both. Immediately after his accession he had to conquer Orissa which was held against him by its Governor Murshid Kuli Khan a brother in law of Sarfaraz Khan. Soon after his return to Bengal a revolt broke out and Ali Vardi Khan had to hurry back to Orissa. The re-establishment of his authority was quickly effected and then the first Maratha invasion occurred.

Mir Habib a general of Murshid Kuli Khan had entered into negotiations with Raghuj Bhonsla the Maratha chieftain of Nagpur and urged him to invade Bengal. The time was favourable for Bengal was denuded of troops by the expedition to Orissa. Raghuj Bhonsla sent one of his generals Bhaskar Pandit with 40,000 cavalry through

Chota Nagpur. Ali Vardi Khan, who was returning from Orissa with a portion of his army, was taken by surprise near Burdwan, and escaped with difficulty to Katwa, where reinforcements were sent to him by river from Murshidabad. A Maratha detachment under Mir Habib made a raid on Murshidabad and plundered part of the city, which was only saved by Ali Vardi Khan making a hurried march to its rescue. He had to abandon the whole of West Bengal, as well as Orissa, to the Marathas, who ravaged the country far and wide. Hooghly was seized by Mir Habib, and nothing remained to Ali Vardi Khan but the capital of Murshidabad and the country to the east of the Ganges, where many of its citizens fled for refuge.

Long years of fighting followed. In 1742 Ali Vardi Khan drove out the Marathas by force of arms. Next year he succeeded, by diplomacy, in enlisting the aid of an army of Marathas under Balaji Rao, the Peshwa of Poona, against the invading forces of Raghuji Bhonsla. Both sides lived on and devastated the country impartially. In 1744 Ali Vardi Khan, who was a believer in the Indian saying "War is made up of fraud," obtained a victory by treachery. He invited Bhaskar

Pandit and his chief officers to a friendly conference in his tent had them assassinated and then attacked and routed their leaderless army

**Rebellions** —Rebellions now broke out and added to the difficulties of Ali Vardi Khan, especially as the rebels made common cause with the Maratha invaders. The first revolt occurred among his Afghan officers headed by his principal general Mustafa Khan, who captured Monghyr and invested Patna. The siege was raised by Ali Vardi Khan the rebels retiring to Shahabad. In the meantime Raghuji Bhonsla enraged at the massacre of his officers invaded Bengal and marching into Bihar effected a junction with the Afghans. He then marched back to Bengal, but being defeated at Katwa withdrew to Nagpur.

Though defeated the Afghans were not pacified. A body of them marched from Darbhanga to Patna in 1748 treacherously assassinated the Governor of Bihar Zain uddin Ahmed (a son in law of Ali Vardi Khan) in open durbar and sacked the city. All India we are told in the *Siyar ul-Mutahharin* was now in arms and every part of it full of the Afghans. They flocked

to Patna, where their numbers swelled to 80,000, and were joined by a large Marathā army under Janoji, the son of Raghuji Bhonsla, who, after overrunning Orissa, had invaded Bengal. Ali Vardi Khan defeated the allied forces of Afghans and Marathas in a great battle near Barh and then reconquered Orissa, which, however, was reoccupied by the mobile Marathas under Mir Habib as soon as he had left

**Cession of Orissa to the Marathas.**—In 1751 Ali Vardi Khan, now an old man of 75, despairing of the struggle against the recurring tide of invasion, came to terms with the Marathas. In satisfaction of their demand for *chauth*, *i e*, one-fourth of the land revenue, which they exacted from conquered countries, he agreed to pay twelve lakhs a year and also to assign them the revenues of Orissa and a small portion of Midnapore, which were held by a Maratha army of occupation as security for payment. The semblance of the Nawab's authority was preserved by the appointment of his bitter enemy Mir Habib as Governor of Orissa on his behalf, but in 1756 this pretence was given up and Orissa became



a Maratha province under a Maratha Governor

**Sufferings of the people** —North and Eastern Bengal alone escaped the ravages of the Marathas. Both Indian and English records agree as to the atrocities committed by them and the miseries of the people. The *Maharashtra Purana* says that the Bargis as the Marathas were called after plundering the fields fired the villages and did not even spare the temples. The rich saved their lives by giving up their gold and silver the poor were murdered. Some had their hands cut off others their noses and ears while others were killed by a single stroke. The *Riyazu Salatin* relates that the Marathas drowned in the rivers a large number of people after cutting off their ears noses and hands and that tying sacks of dirt to the mouths of others they mangled and burnt them with indescribable torture.

Holwell again writes in *Interesting Historical Facts* (1766) Every evil attending destructive war was felt by this unhappy country in the most eminent degree. A scarcity of grain in all parts the wages of labour greatly

enhanced trade foreign and inland labouring under every disadvantage and oppression; and, although during the recesses of the enemy, from June to October, the manufactures of this opulent country raised their drooping heads, yet the duration of their reprieves from danger was so short, that every species of cloth at the *arungs*, i e, the rural factories, "was hastily and consequently badly fabricated, though 'immensely raised in its price, and from these causes came into disrepute at all the foreign markets, particularly at the western parts of Juddah, Mocha and Bussorah. The trade of the Europeans became greatly embarrassed and injured, their effects were often plundered by the enemy, and these grievances were much heightened by the exactions of the usurper,' as he called Ali Vardi Khan. To Holwell the annual invasions of the Marathas exhibited a succession of murders, oppressions and distresses, of marches. counter-marches. retreats and skirmishes with varying success but with uniform misery to the people

➤ Fortunately for the country the Maratha invasions were only periodic. It had a respite during the rainy season when the

Maratha cavalry could not operate as explained in a report written in 1769, which says—"A large tract was annually invaded by the Mahrattas, who burnt and destroyed all that they could come at the poor inhabitants flying for shelter to the principal cities European factories, etc. The swelling of the rivers at the approach of the rains always obliged the Mahrattas to retire and the inhabitants were again secure till January. They having encouragement set immediately to work and endeavoured to get their crops in and sent to market before the time returned for the apprehended invasion."

Orissa, however obtained no deliverance, for it was under the tyranny of the Marathas until the British conquest in 1803. According to *Stirling's Account of Orissa* (1882) their rule was fatal to the welfare of the people and the prosperity of the country and exhibits a picture of misrule anarchy weakness rapacity and violence combined which makes one wonder how society can have kept together under so calamitous a tyranny. Motte who travelled through Orissa in 1766 on his way to Sambalpur to purchase diamonds for Clive gives a dismal account of the state of the country. 'In my journey it will be

unnecessary to say that any place I came to was once considerable, since all the places which were not so are now depopulated by the Mahrattas, and such alone remain as on account of their bulk are longer in decaying

. It is the custom of the Mahratta troops to plunder as much in the zamindaries tributary to them as in any enemy's country " To add to the miseries of the Oriyas two great famines broke out, one in 1770 and the other in 1777, and the horrors of the first were intensified by a mutiný of the Maratha soldiers, who ravaged the country while the people were dying

### **The pro-Hindu policy of Ali Vardi Khan.—**

That Ali Vardi Khan was able to maintain himself in power for so long may be ascribed largely to his policy in associating<sup>1</sup> Hindus with his government during the last eight years of his rule, as well as to the fact that he kept the army, which was mainly Muhammadan, well and regularly paid. This is clearly brought out by Orme (1788), some of whose remarks on his policy may be quoted " Warned by the experience of his own ambition, the defection of Mir Habib and the rebellion<sup>2</sup> of Mustapha Khan, he declined as

much as possible to entrust any Muhammadan excepting of his own lineage, with any power out of his sight which might either tempt or enable him to revolt. He preferred the service of Gentoos' i.e. Hindus, "in every office and dignity of the State excepting in the ranks of the army for which they neither wished nor were fit

Orme gives specific instances of the appointment of Hindus to high office of which two only need be mentioned. ' He gave the government of Hooghly and its district in which all the European settlements on the river are situated to Manik Chand, and after the assassination of Zainuddin Ahmed he would not trust the government of Bihar, notwithstanding its importance as a province and a frontier to Mir Jafar although his brother in law and the first officer in his army, but gave it to the Gentoo Ram Narayan. The Rajas both of Bengal and Bihar sought their protection and exemptions from their fellow Gentoos who were established in his confidence and contributed not a little to increase their fortunes. Thus was the Gentoo connection become the most opulent influence in the government of which it pervaded every

department with such efficacy that nothing could move without their participation or knowledge, nor did they ever deceive their benefactor, but co-operated to strengthen his administration and relieve his wants, and it is said that the Seths alone gave him in one present the enormous sum of three millions of rupees as a contribution to support the expenses of the Mahratta war ”

**Internal administration.**—The internal administration was left largely in the hands of the great landholders or zamindars, who collected the revenue of the tracts under them and made it over to the Nawab’s officers. So long as they were regular in their payments, they were not interfered with. They were, however, ready to take advantage of any weakness or relaxation of the bonds of authority—the *Siyar-ul-Mutakharin* brands them as a malevolent race, a refractory, shortsighted, faithless set, who mind nothing but present interest and require always a strict hand. They were kept in check and the authority of the Nawab enforced by officers called Faujdars, or military commandants, who had detachments of troops under them and were responsible for the maintenance of the public

peace and the suppression of any zamindar who withheld his revenue

Practically the only civil officers in the districts were the Daroghas who tried any murderers dacoits or other criminals who might be arrested by the zamindar but had only limited powers having to refer their proceedings to the Naib Nazim or Deputy Governor in all but minor cases. They had no authority over the zamindars, who discharged most of the functions of civil administration and chose their subordinates solely with reference to their ability to secure their masters interests. They paid fixed sums by way of revenue excise and trade duties and were free to make what they could of the people. The adjudicature of small criminal and civil cases was left to them. The duties of police were also in their hands and were most indifferently performed the police and often the zamindars themselves being the patrons of dacoits who preyed on the people.

**Formation of the United East India Company.**—It is now necessary to revert to the affairs of the English East India Company. Its endeavour to maintain a monopoly of the

Indian trade had already been challenged by interlopers in India. In England it had to face strong opposition, and the competition with its rivals was raised to the sphere of high politics. The old Company managed to secure a new exclusive charter from the King in 1693, but the House of Commons denied the royal right by a resolution affirming that "all the subjects of England have a right to trade to the East Indies unless prohibited by Act of Parliament." A new company was formed which in 1698 obtained from Parliament the privilege of exclusive trade with India, the old company being given three years in which to wind up its affairs. The victory over the old company was due partly to a loan of £2,000,000, which the new company advanced to the Government, and partly to luck in a division in the House, for according to Evelyn's Diary "the old East India lost their business against the new company by ten votes in Parliament, so many of their friends being absent going to see a tiger baited by dogs."

The new Company made its headquarters at Hooghly under Sir Edward Littleton as its President, that of the old Company remained at Calcutta where its affairs were managed by a resolute character named



**Beard** An unhealthy and unedifying competition followed, each company intriguing for the patronage of the Mughal Governor and the favour of his officials who naturally preferred the highest bidder. A compromise was effected in 1702 and the companies amalgamated. This arrangement was ratified by Parliament granting in 1708 a charter to the United Company of merchants of England trading to the East Indies "generally known as the East India Company which was to hold the field till 1858

**Checks to commerce**—Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century the British in Bengal continued to pursue a strictly commercial policy and had no idea of territorial aggrandisement. Their main anxiety was the security of their trade which for some time remained exposed to interruption while their persons and property were liable to seizure. The command of the sea route enabled Calcutta to have some independence but the inland factories were held on a precarious tenure.

At the end of 1701 Aurangzeb issued a proclamation ordering the arrest of all Europeans in India on the ground that they were

guilty of piratical attacks on and seizure of ships carrying pilgrims from Surat to Mecca. The Company's servants were seized and its property confiscated at outlying stations—those at Patna were confined for 51 days in the common jail—but the settlement at Calcutta was in a stronger position and could even venture on reprisals. Beard declared that he would not waste money by “always giving to every little rascal” and took the practical step of strengthening the garrison, though even so it numbered only 120 men. This was followed up by laying the Mughal shipping bound for Surat and Persia under an embargo till the obnoxious order was withdrawn.

**The Patna factory.**—The difficulties under which the British laboured may be realized from the vicissitudes of the station at Patna. In 1704 trade had been so much crippled by heavy impositions that orders of recall were issued to the Agent there, but were countermanded a month later. In 1707, in fear of the disorder expected on the death of Aurangzeb, the staff were instructed to leave Patna, but two years later it was decided to keep on the factory, as the government was by this

time more settled In 1712 Prince Farrukh siyar, who was making a bid for the imperial throne, laid Patna under contribution and the British had to hand over Rs 22 000 to him Next year it was again resolved to abandon the factory but it was re-established in 1718, as it was found that without a resident staff it was impossible to obtain supplies of salt petre and piece-goods

**Surman's embassy** —Efforts to maintain the cherished exemption of trade from customs duties were not relaxed In 1708 the Viceroy Prince Azim us-shan demanded in return for this privilege the sum of Rs 50 000 besides Rs 1 00 000 for the imperial treasury seized the Agent at Raj mahal and held up the Company's cargo boats on the Ganges The British at Calcutta retaliated by threatening to seize all Indian shipping and to recall all their servants to Calcutta a step which would have paralyzed the riverborne trade for nearly all the best captains in the Mughal service were English men The dispute was eventually settled in 1709 when the British paid Rs 45 000 and received authority to trade free of the usual customs

This permit had only a temporary value, for Murshid Kuli Khan, refusing to recognise the action of his predecessor, demanded the payment of customs. The British, with their faith in the power of imperial mandates unshaken by past experience, resolved to approach the Emperor. They accordingly despatched an embassy under John Surman and an Armenian agent named Khoja Sarhad. The embassy started in 1714 and after  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years obtained a number of *farmans*, largely owing to the services of the embassy surgeon, William Hamilton, who cured the Emperor of a complaint and won his favour. Permission was granted to acquire leases of 38 villages near Calcutta, 33 on the east and five on the west bank, and all goods covered by a *dastak* or pass signed by the President at Calcutta were to be exempt from stoppage and examination. The former concession was rendered largely nugatory by the Nawab preventing the landlords from granting leases to the British. The operation of the latter was naturally restricted to goods imported or exported overseas. The British took no part in inland trade, even if they had, there would have been no reason for giving them a

specially favoured position to the prejudice of Indian traders

**Progress of Calcutta**—After this the trade of Calcutta and other factories prospered, as the British propitiated local officials with suitable presents and Calcutta grew with the influx of settlers especially during the Maratha invasions when it afforded a refuge from the devastations of war. In 1742 with the permission of Ali Vardi Khan the construction of a great moat round the town was begun as a defence against attack but the alarm having subsided the work was stopped after a length of 3 miles had been excavated part of the Maratha Ditch as it was called was subsequently utilized for the Chitpur Canal.

Calcutta was still a small town. Captain Alexander Hamilton in his *Account of the East Indies* (1727) estimated its population at 10 000 to 12 000. It was still extraordinarily unhealthy. Hamilton says that Charnock could not have chosen a more unhealthy place on all the river and tells us that in one year when he was at Calcutta there were about 1 200 Englishmen in August and before the beginning of January 469 burials had been

registered Its military strength was also insignificant Its garrison consisted of two or three companies of soldiers, who were used more for the convoy of the Company's fleet of boats bringing down saltpetre, piece-goods, raw silk and opium from Patna than for the defence of the fort According to Hamilton, some impertinent, troublesome Rajas between Patna and Cossimbazar tried to levy tolls on all merchandise passing along the river, but some detachments from Fort William generally cleared the passage with the loss of a few men

The subordinate position of the English at this time is apparent from his remark that there was no need of a strong garrison, as there was no fear of any enemy trying to dispossess the Company while it held its colony in fee-tail of the Mughal, while any quarrel they might have with the Government would soon be ended by the Mughal prohibiting his subjects to trade with the Company

**The attitude of Ali Vardi Khan.**—According to the *Siyar-ul-Mutakharin*, Ali Vardi Khan was urged by his chief general, Mustafa Khan, some time before 1745, to expel the British from Calcutta and seize their wealth,

but rejected his advice with the words—  
 ‘What evil have the English done to me that I should wish evil to them? The fire on land is not yet extinguished, and if it is extended to the sea who will quench it?’ The reference was to the Maratha invasions and to the sea power of the British. Later Ali Vardi Khan changed his views about the harmlessness of the British as will be shown in the next chapter but throughout his rule they were allowed to carry on their trade on the authority of the imperial *farman*.

At the same time Ali Vardi Khan took good care to make them respect his authority. In 1740 when an English man-of-war captured some vessels whose cargo included some goods consigned to merchants at Hooghly as well as to the Nawab himself he demanded instant restitution and enforced his orders by stopping the cargo boats proceeding to Calcutta cutting off the supply of provisions to the factory at Dacca and investing that at Coimbatour with troops. Eventually the British settled the matter by paying Rs 12 00 000.

On another occasion a rupture was caused by the British failing to comply with his demand for the cession of a Mulkamdaran

who had died at Calcutta intestate and without heirs. They promptly submitted when he threatened to attack the factory at Cossimbazar if they persisted in recalcitrance.

**Other European settlements.**—At the beginning of the eighteenth century the French, Dutch and Danes had settlements along the Hooghly. The number grew as fresh competitors for the trade of Bengal appeared on the scene and obtained permission to establish factories from the Nawabs of Bengal. The latter followed no consistent policy, at one time being openly hostile to newcomers and at another granting them trade concessions partly as a means of raising revenue and partly as a counterpoise to the Europeans already established.

**The Ostend Company.**—The merchants of Ostend and other Flemish towns had long been anxious to obtain a share of the Indian trade. Commissions to trade with India were obtained from the Emperor Charles VI—the Spanish Netherlands had passed under the crown of Austria—and were eagerly accepted by private traders, English as well as Dutch, anxious to break the monopolies of



the great chartered companies. The Dutch and English Governments made remonstrances to Charles and when these proved unavailing forbade their subjects to accept commissions for trade with India from a foreign power.

In 1722 the Ostend Company was incorporated by the Emperor. The Dutch and English Governments protested that his action infringed previous treaties *e.g.* that of Munster by which the King of Spain (to whose authority in the Netherlands Charles had succeeded) had undertaken that none of his subjects should sail from Europe to India. As a counterblast the British Parliament passed an Act imposing penalties on all British subjects who subscribed to the Ostend Company and any of them in India trading without permission from the East India Company was made liable to imprisonment. The Company was abolished after nine years as the Emperor was anxious to obtain the consent of the European powers to the Pragmatic Sanction. It is this Company which is referred to by Carlyle as the Kaiser's Imperial Ostend East India Company which convulsed the diplomatic world for seven years and made Europe to hurl from side to side in a terrible manner.

The Ostend Company got permission from Murshid Kuli Khan to set up a factory at Bankibazar a village on the east bank of the Hooghly three miles north of Barrackpore, of which even the name has disappeared from the maps. The Dutch and English used the weapons of intrigue to get rid of their new rivals and represented to the Nawab that the Flemish had set up strong fortifications which menaced his authority. The Nawab ordered the factory to be closed, and when the Flemish declined to leave it, attacked and captured it, apparently in 1723, though some accounts give the date of 1733. The factory was subsequently reoccupied by agents of the company, who were, however, expelled again by Ali Vardi Khan.

**The Emden Company.**—Another attempt to secure a share of the trade of Bengal was made by Frederick the Great of Prussia, who followed up his efforts to develop the port of Emden by founding in 1753 the *Bengalische Handelsgesellschaft*, more generally known as the Emden Company. It obtained a footing along the Hooghly with the permission of Ali Vardi Khan, who had at first opposed it, writing to the English Council at Calcutta—

“ If the Germans come here, it will be very bad for all the Europeans but for you worst of all and you will afterwards repent it and I shall be obliged to stop all your trade and business

Therefore take care that these German ships do not come “ God forbid that they should come ’ replied the President but should this be the case, I am in hopes they will be either sunk broke or destroyed Despite all these hostile sentiments the Prussians established a factory a short distance south of Chandernagore Their venture was short lived for they could not withstand the hostility of the other European companies on whom moreover, they were dependent for pilotage through the dangerous shoals of the Hooghly river and by 1700 the Company was wound up

**The Danes** — Another instance of the lack of settled policy on the part of the Mughal Government is afforded by the evacuation and subsequent return of the Danes In 1714 they had been forced to leave their settlements owing to some difference with the Government and retired to Trinquar with a ship which they captured on their way down the river Hooghly In 1755 owing to the good offices

of the French, who interceded for them, they received from Ali Vardi Khan a grant of land at Serampore which they named Frederiksnagore after the King of Denmark, Frederick V.

**The French.**—For the first thirty years of the eighteenth century the trade of the French languished, so much so that a contemporary account says that their chief business in Bengal was hearing masses in their church at Chandernagore “From the period of its first occupation,” writes Colonel Malleon, “to the time when Dupleix assumed the Intendantship, Chandernagore had been regarded as a settlement of very minor importance Starved by the parent Company in Paris, it had been unable, partly from want of means and partly also from the want of enterprise on the part of the settlers, to carry on any large commercial operations Lodges or commercial posts, dependent upon Chandernagore, had also been established at Cossimbazar, Jougdia, Dacca, Balasore and Patna But their operations were of small extent The long stint of money on the part of the Company of the Indies had had, besides, a

most pernicious effect upon the several Intendants and their subordinates. The stagnation attendant upon poverty had lasted so long that it had demoralised the community. The members of it had even come to regard stagnation as the natural order of things."

All this was changed in the ten years (1731—41) during which Chandernagore was governed by Duplex. His enterprise energy and diplomacy transformed the place which became for a time the most prosperous of all the European settlements while the reputation and prestige of the French were greatly enhanced. After his transfer to Pondicherry however Chandernagore suffered from want of funds and lack of vigour on the part of its administrators and by 1755 so far from paying its way it had a deficit of 26 or 27 lakhs of rupees.

## CHAPTER V.

### The war with Siraj-ud-daula.

“ The English conquest of India,” it has been pointed out by Sir John Seeley in *The Expansion of England*, “ began not in some quarrel between the Company and a native Power. It began in an alarming attempt made by the French to get control of the Deccan, and so, among other things, to destroy the English settlements at Madras and Bombay, by interfering in the question of the Hyderabad succession. Our first military step in the East was to defend ourselves against the French attack.” The struggles of the French and British in Southern India ended in the ascendancy of the British and incidentally proved the inability of the ill-organised and badly trained armies of Indian rulers to withstand disciplined battalions of sepoys trained on the European model and led by generals versed in the military science of Europe. They also showed that the commanders of those battalions, by intervening in Indian politics, could easily control them;

they could overthrow and set up dynasties with them rested the power of dictatorship.

There is no doubt that the trend of events in Southern India was closely studied by Ali Vardi Khan on whom the lessons of the war in the Carnatic were not lost. Fearing that the Europeans might follow the same policy in Bengal he came to the conclusion that they must be kept in check and prevented from becoming a political danger. Holwell found when he was a prisoner at Murshidabad after his release from the Black Hole that it was common rumour that Ali Vardi Khan had intended to destroy the European forts and garrisons and to reduce them to the same subordinate position as the Armenians who were merely private traders without military resources. He had it on good authority that a few days before his death in April 1756 Ali Vardi Khan solemnly warned his grandson and successor Siraj ud daula of their menace to his power. Keep in view he said the power the European nations have in the country. This fear I would have freed you from if God had lengthened my days. Their wars and politics in the Telinga country should keep you wary. On pretence of private contests between their

kings they have seized and divided the country of the King and the goods of his people between them. Think not to weaken all three\* together The power of the English is great, reduce them first, the others will give you little trouble when you have reduced them Suffer them not, my son, to have fortifications or soldiers, if you do, the country is not yours ”

**Accession of Siraj-ud-daula, 1756.**—Siraj-ud-daula, we learn from Monsieur Law, the French chief of Cossimbazar, who knew him well, was already notorious for debauchery and revolting cruelty Law says, for instance, that in the rainy season he used to have the ferry boats upset or sunk in order to have the cruel pleasure of watching the terrified confusion of a hundred people at a time, men, women and children, of whom many not being able to swim were sure to perish Avarice was another element in a revolting character “ Siraj-ud-daula was one of the richest Nawabs that had ever reigned Without mentioning his revenues, of which he gave no account at the Court of

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\* The three were the French, English and Dutch The King was the Mughal Emperor The Telinga country was Southern India



Delhi, he possessed immense wealth, which had been left by the preceding Nawabs. In spite of this he thought only of increasing his wealth. If any extraordinary expense had to be met, he ordered contributions and levied them with extreme rigour. He supposed that money was as common with other people as with himself, and that the Europeans especially were inexhaustible. From his behaviour one would have said that his object was to ruin everybody. He spared no one, not even his relatives, from whom he took all the pensions and all the offices which they had in the time of Aliverdi Khan. Was it possible for such a man to keep his throne? He soon alienated both the noblemen of his court and the officers of his army. Any of his officers, says the *Riyazu's Salatin*, who went to wait on Siraj-ud-daula despaired of life and honour, and whoever returned without being disgraced and ill-treated offered thanks to God.

Even before Alivardi Khan's death Siraj-ud-daula was known to be hostile to the English largely on religious grounds; they would not receive him in their factories, or houses at Calcutta, or for the simple reason that when he came to take the furniture

or, if he fancied it, took it away. On succeeding to the throne he determined on a rupture. Basing his policy on Ali Vardi Khan's advice, he declared his attention to reduce the power of the English and swore that he would drive them out of the country unless they agreed to trade in it on the same footing as before they obtained Farrukhsiyar's *farman*.

First, however, he had to make his own position secure against the rivalry of his cousin Shaukat Jang, who as Military Governor of Purnea was warden of the northern marches and had a large force at his command. The father of Shaukat Jang, expecting the death of Ali Vardi Khan any day, had intrigued with the Grand Vizier of the Emperor to have the Viceroyalty of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa conferred upon him and had begun to collect a large army with which to maintain his claims against Siraj-ud-daula. He died, however, a few months before Ali Vardi Khan, and when Siraj-ud-daula marched north with his army, Shaukat Jang, taken by surprise, made no opposition but acknowledged him as his overlord.

**Rupture with the English.**—Siraj-ud-daula was now free to deal with the British

Drake the President, deserted his charge and embarking on the shipping in the river with some members of the Council, the military commandant and part of the garrison left Calcutta to its fate. Holwell, who was elected to the command held out till nearly 100 of the little garrison had been killed or wounded and only 14 artillerymen and two hours ammunition were left. He began a parley with the besiegers and while it was in progress the postern gate of the fort was betrayed to the enemy who rushed in. Holwell had no alternative but an unconditional surrender.

**The Black Hole of Calcutta**—The survivors to the number of 146 were imprisoned in a guardroom or military prison in the fort to which the name of the Black Hole is given. This consisted of one small room measuring 18 by 14 feet. Designed for a few military prisoners it was a death trap for the number now crowded in it. It was the night of 20th June one of the stifling hot nights preceding the breaking of the monsoon and the two small grated windows were insufficient to give air to the closely packed crowd of prisoners. Within three hours the

victims began to die When morning broke and orders were at length given to open the prison, only twenty-three were still alive, and the mass of dead bodies behind the door was so great that it took twenty minutes to force it open

For this tragedy Siraj-ud-daula cannot be held responsible It was the result, not of deliberate orders or calculated cruelty, but rather of callous brutality It is doubtful whether it was at first realized that confinement in such a small space meant certain death Apparently when it was realized, there was no one with sufficient humanity to take the responsibility of ordering their release They were merely left to die Holwell himself expressed the belief that Siraj-ud-daula's orders were simply that captives should be secured for the night and that the tragedy which followed was the result of resentment and revenge on behalf of the *jamadars* or subordinate officers on account of the number of their comrades killed during the siege

Siraj-ud-daula kept Holwell and three others as prisoners, treating them with a cruel severity which showed utter indifference

to their sufferings, and he released the rest. Disappointed at finding only Rs 50,000 in the treasury instead of the fabulous wealth he expected, he returned to Murshidabad, leaving Rs 3½ lakhs from the French and Rs 4½ lakhs from the Dutch and leaving a garrison of 3,000 men to hold Calcutta of which a large part had been burnt down.

**Downfall of Shaukat Jang**—A conspiracy against Siraj ud daula was now set on foot by Mir Jafar Khan, brother in law of Ali Vardi Khan who had been dismissed from the office of Commander in Chief in conjunction with other Muhammadan noblemen who were aggrieved by the appointment by Siraj ud-daula of his favourites to various posts and especially of an obscure Hindu as Diwan of the whole province. They invited Shaukat Jang Siraj ud daula's cousin to assume the government and at this juncture the intrigues of his father bore fruit for Shaukat Jang received from the Grand Vizier of the Emperor a patent of appointment as Nawab Nazim of Bengal Bihar and Orissa. He had therefore under the political system of the moribund Mughal Empire legitimate claims to the Viceroyalty of the province to

which Siraj-ud-daula could not pretend. In personal character he was no more fitted for the office than Siraj-ud-daula, in the judgment of the author of the *Siyar-ul-Mukhtalharin*, himself their kinsman, the two were equally proud, equally cruel, and equally incapable. Shaukat Jang, who was clearly suffering from megalomania, sent Siraj-ud-daula a ridiculous message announcing his appointment and calling on him to resign. Siraj-ud-daula's answer was practical and to the point. He led one army into Purnea and ordered up another under Ram Narayan-Rai, Governor of Bihar. The two combined armies easily defeated the forces of Shaukat Jang in a battle fought in October 1756 at Baldibari between Manihari and Nawabganj, in which Shaukat Jang met his death.

**The recapture of Calcutta.**—At the time the fortunes of the English were at a very low ebb. Their settlements had been lost and all their property confiscated. The refugees from Calcutta and the outstations spent many miserable months of privation at Falta on the river Hooghly. "It strains the imagination," writes Sir William Hunter in *A River*

of *Ruined Capitals*, ' to conceive that this solitary place was once the last foothold of the British power in Bengal. A consultation held by the fugitive Council on board the schooner *Phoenix* relates how their military member had written a complimentary letter to the Nawab, who had done their comrades to death complaining a little of the hard usage of the English Honourable Company assuring him of his good intentions notwithstanding what had happened and begging him in the meanwhile till things were cleared up that he would treat him at least as a friend and give orders that our people might be supplied with provisions in a full and friendly manner. To such a depth of abasement had fallen the British power—that power to which in less than a year the field of Plassey was to give the mastery of Bengal.

At Falta the refugees were joined by a detachment of 230 men which had been sent as a reinforcement from Madras before the receipt of news of the fall of Calcutta but their number was so reduced by death and sickness that only 30 remained fit for duty. At length in December 1759 a joint military and naval expedition which was sent

from Madras for the recovery of Calcutta, arrived under the command of Clive and Admiral Watson. It consisted of a small fleet of 8 vessels and a force of 600 Europeans and 1,200 sepoy.

Its first objective was the fort at Budge-Budge, which had been fortified and garrisoned by Manik Chand, the Governor of Calcutta. The troops marched overland, and when they were resting after a long and exhausting march, were taken by surprise by a force of 3,500 men under Manik Chand. A stout resistance was offered and when this developed into an attack, Manik Chand withdrew his troops and marched off to Murhshidabad, leaving a garrison of 500 men at Calcutta. The same night the fort of Budge-Budge, in which a breach had been made by the guns of the Admiral's flag-ship, was captured in an extraordinary manner. One of a party of sailors who had come ashore climbed up the breach and coming on some of the garrison attacked them single-handed. His comrades scrambled up to his aid, and the troops followed, whereupon the garrison fled. Calcutta was next attacked by the fleet and being abandoned by the small garrison after a few shots had been exchanged, was



reoccupied by the British on 22nd January 1757. This was followed by the capture of Hooghly the nearest stronghold of Siraj ud daula and according to Clive, "the second city in the kingdom" after a bombardment by Watson's ships and a hard fought fight.

**Treaty with Siraj ud daula** —At the end of the month Siraj ud-daula advanced to retake Calcutta with an army of 43 000 men. Clive could only muster a little over 2 000 and decided that a bold attack was the best means of defence. The attack was delivered at dawn on 4th February and ended in an extraordinary battle fought in a blinding fog in the outskirts of Calcutta. Friend could not be distinguished from foe some of the troops completely lost their way and part of the British losses were due to their own fire. The action though not altogether decisive ended in a reverse for Siraj ud daula who became alarmed for the safety of his communications and had a wholesome fear of the British ships and their gunners. Five days later he concluded a treaty by which the re-establishment of the Company's settlements and factories, the restitution of its property and the recoupment of its losses was agreed to the

former trade privileges were guaranteed and the right to fortify Calcutta was acknowledged

**Capture of Chandernagore.**—By this time news had been received of the declaration of war between England and France—the war which is known in history as the Seven Years' War. It was believed that the French had a secret alliance with Siraj-ud-daula, and an expedition under Lally was expected to descend any day on the Coromandel coast. It was necessary to break the power of the French in Bengal, and, in March 1757, Chandernagore was taken, the fleet again doing good work under Admiral Watson. The British not only acquired a much-needed supply of munitions, but prevented a French invasion of Bengal, for, in response to Siraj-ud-daula's appeal, Bussy, the general of the French troops at Hyderabad, was on the march and had reached Ganjam when the news of the fall of Chandernagore reached him and made him abandon his expedition. The field was now left clear for a struggle with Siraj-ud-daula without his having the assistance of the French.

### The renewal of war with Siraj ud daula —

It was clear that Siraj ud-daula had no intention of observing the treaty though he held his hand for a time in fear of an invasion by the Marathas and by Ahmed Shah Durani who had recently sacked Delhi. He kept part of his army in an entrenched camp at Plassey and sent emissaries to Bussy urging him to march to Bengal and drive out the British.

The conclusion to which the Select Committee at Calcutta came to was that Siraj ud daula being determined to extirpate the British it was but common prudence to prevent their own ruin. In this decision they were confirmed by the universal hatred of all sorts and conditions of men to Siraj ud daula the affection of his army alienated from him by his ill usage of the officers and a revolution so generally wished for that it is probable it would be attempted (and perhaps successfully) even without our assistance. The objects which they had in view were the preservation and the elimination of the French whom they desired to keep totally out of these dominions.

**Conspiracy against Siraj ud-daula —**The leading men of Bengal were equally anxious

for a revolution Monsieur Law declared that the dethronement of the Nawab had become an absolute necessity. He regretted that the French had not seized the opportunity when Shaukat Jāng made his bid for power. "Everyone longed for a change, and the result would have been happiness and tranquillity for Bengal. Three or four hundred Europeans and a few sepoy would have done the business. If we could have joined this force to the enemies of Siraj-ud-daula, we should have placed on the throne another Nawab. As it was, we remained quiet, and the rash valour of the young Nawab of Purnea, while it delivered Siraj-ud-daula from the only enemy he had to fear in the country made it clear to the whole of Bengal that the change so much desired could be effected only by the English."

A fresh conspiracy was now formed, in which the prime movers were Mir Jafar Khan, now in command of part of Siraj-ud-daula's army, and the Seths, the State bankers, who had extraordinary influence. Their family, Law tells us, had long been the chief cause of all the revolutions in Bengal and had overthrown Sarfaraz Khan in order to enthrone Ali Vardi Khan. "They could by

themselves have formed a party and even without the assistance of any Europeans have put another Nawab upon the throne and re-established the English, but this would have required much time' Time was of importance for the Seths feared the confiscation of their wealth the English an attack which might end in their extinction

It was agreed to depose Siraj ud daula and set up Mir Jafar Khan in his place and a pact was drawn up embodying the terms on which the English would co-operate with their forces The plot was twice in danger of exposure Law himself denounced the Seths to Siraj ud daula who only laughed at the idea of treason Later Amin Chand a Calcutta banker and agent of the Seths who was employed as an intermediary threatened to divulge it to Siraj ud daula unless he was paid the sum of Rs 30 lakhs which he claimed as compensation for losses sustained in the capture of Calcutta Clive closed his mouth by a Machiavellian trick Two treaties were drawn up one on white paper which guaranteed Amin Chand's claim the other on red paper which contained no such stipulation and was not shown to Amin Chand To make this discreditable transaction worse

when Admiral Watson (who died two months later) refused to sign the sham treaty, his signature was forged Amin Chand did not, as Macaulay says, become insane from the shock of finding himself tricked, for references to him in the old records show that he resumed a profitable and legitimate trade Amin Chand was a blackmailer, and it might be claimed that no scruple was necessary in outwitting him This, at any rate, was Clive's view He and his colleagues held that any weapon was admissible in order to overthrow Siraj-ud-daula But the whole transaction was an unsavoury one

**The battle of Plassey.**—All being in train, Clive advanced from Chandernagore with his army consisting of 950 European infantry, 150 artillerymen with 10 field-pieces and 2,100 native infantry The last consisted partly of the sepoys he had brought from Madras and partly of the newly raised Bengal Battalion, which was recruited from among soldiers of fortune, mainly Pathans and Rohillas, who came to Calcutta from Upper India Siraj-ud-daula concentrated an army of 50,000 foot and 18,000 horse, with 53 guns, at Plassey The disparity of numbers was reduced by the

fact that one division of his army under Mir Jafar Khan took no part in the fighting but even so Clive's forces were a mere fraction of those opposed to them

The battle of Plassey (23rd June 1757) was a rout rather than a battle. The losses on both sides were surprisingly small. Those in Siraj ud daula's army were 500 killed and as many wounded; the British casualties were only 22 killed and 50 wounded. A small body of French artillerymen in Siraj ud daula's service put up a good fight but as soon as Clive delivered an attack in force the Mughal army broke and fled. The victory was the direct result of the effective fire of the British guns and the disciplined valour of their troops but much must also be ascribed to the working of treachery among Siraj ud daula's followers. Apart from the defection of the troops under Mir Jafar Khan's command Siraj ud daula was urged to flee at a critical moment by a general who was one of the conspirators. This evil advice he took and his departure with 2000 cavalry dispirited his army which concluded that the day was lost. In any case it may be doubted whether it had the stomach for a fierce fight.

Only a few days before, the troops at Murshidabad had mutinied in order to enforce demands for pay long in arrears and had only been induced to march by the distribution of largess

Six days after the battle Mir Jafar Khan was installed as Nawab Nazim by Clive. Siraj-ud-daula fled northwards from Murshidabad, his idea being to effect a junction with Monsieur Law and then march to Patna, where he believed he could count on the support of Ram Narayan Rai, the Governor of Bihar. At Rajmahal he was recognized, in spite of his disguise, by a man whose ears and nose had been cut off under his orders for some real or imaginary offence. This man betrayed him to the Commandant of Rajmahal, who was a brother of Mir Jafar Khan. Siraj-ud-daula was sent a prisoner to Murshidabad, where he was put to death by Miran, the son of Mir Jafar Khan.

**Eyre Coote's expedition.**—Monsieur Law, who had with him a force of 175 Europeans and 100 sepoy, arrived near Rajmahal a few hours after the seizure of Siraj-ud-daula. A detachment of 750 men was sent under Eyre



Coote to capture Law if possible and in any case to prevent him joining hands with the Governor of Bihar and making trouble there. The latter object was accomplished, but Law himself succeeded in escaping into Oudh, Eyre Coote marching as far as Chapra in pursuit. It was a remarkable expedition, considering the smallness of the force, the distance from its base and the absence of supports— a mere handful of troops as Broome points out ' pursuing an enemy for nearly 400 miles through a country almost unknown and either secretly or openly hostile with continued obstacles and difficulties occurring at every step and this too at the most unhealthy and trying season of the year.

**The Jagat Seths**—For a proper understanding of the part played by the Jagat Seths of Murshidabad in the revolution which overthrew Siraj ud daula the position held by them in Bengal may be explained. They were Marwari bankers from Jodhpur and the name of Jagat Seth by which different members of the family were known was really a title conferred by the Emperor meaning 'world banker'. They have been described as the Rothchilds of India and

Burke declared that their financial transactions were as extensive as those of the Bank of England. The founder of their fortunes was Manik Chand, who became the banker of Murshid Kuli Khan at Dacca and afterwards at Murshidabad. His successor, Fateh Chand, who had been head of the firm at Delhi, acquired immense influence, the annual revenue of Bengal being remitted to Delhi by means of drafts issued by him. He was a Member of Council under Shuja-ud-din Khan and was largely instrumental in engineering the revolution which overthrew Sarfaraz Khan and installed Ali Vardi Khan. The impelling cause was desire for revenge on the voluptuous Sarfaraz Khan who had insulted the honour of a lady of his house.

The firm next passed to Mahtab Rai and Swarup Chand, who continued to control the finances of Bengal. All the bankers of the province were members of their family or their agents. The pay of the army and civil administration depended on their honouring the orders for payment made by the Nawab. They stood security for revenue farmers and regulated the rate of exchange, being, according to a letter sent by the Calcutta Council

to the Court of Directors in 1753 sole purchasers of all the bullion imported into Bengal. According to Orme the French at Chandernagore were indebted to them to the extent of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million rupees. Their wealth may be gauged from the fact that when Mir Habib raided Murshidabad he carried off from them two crores of rupees but this loss it was said did not affect them more than if it had been two trusses of straw and they continued to issue bills of exchange for a crore of rupees at a time.

After the capture of Calcutta in 1756 the fugitive Council at Falta appealed to the Jagat Seths to intercede with Siraj ud-daula for them assuring them that the English depended on them and them alone for the hopes they had of being allowed to settle again in Bengal. At this juncture the Jagat Seths had a quarrel with Siraj ud-daula who reproached them for not obtaining from Delhi the imperial ratification of his office as Nawab and also demanded a contribution of 3 crores of rupees from the mercantile classes. On their refusing to provide this sum Siraj ud-daula struck one of the Seths and had him placed in confinement. This was very

probably a contributory factor in making them enter into the conspiracy against Siraj-ud-daula. The first overtures to the English came from them, and it was long the current belief that the rupees of these Marwari bankers contributed to the overthrow of the Mughal Government in Bengal no less than the military prowess of the English.

## CHAPTER VI

### British Ascendancy, 1757—65

The position after Plassey—It is a commonplace that the battle of Plassey marked the beginning of British rule. The Company had at this time however no idea of obtaining territory or of assuming the government of the country. Its objects and interests remained commercial. An internal revolution had been effected by which a ruler favourable to its interests had been substituted for an implacable enemy—a revolution which within a year was formally regularized by the Emperor granting to Mir Jafar Khan a patent of appointment as Subahdar or Viceroy of Bengal Bihar and Orissa in point of fact Orissa was under Maratha rule but it was still looked upon by a legal fiction as being in the gift of the Emperor. The idea was that the old form of government should be maintained but with the Company in a secure position free from the rivalry of the French and with no fear of harassment by the Nawab or his officers. The Company was to pursue a policy of non intervention and

an assurance to this effect was given by Clive to Mir Jafar Ali Khan on his installation "We should," he declared, "not anyways interfere in the affairs of the Government, but leave that wholly to the Nawab As long as his affairs required it, we were ready to keep the field, after which we should return to Calcutta and attend solely to commerce, which was our proper sphere and our whole aim in these parts "

Similarly the pact with Mir Jafar Ali Khan merely provided for the fulfilment of the treaty with Siraj-ud-daula, for the security of the Company's possessions and the elimination of the French The sum to be paid to the Company on account of its losses in the capture of Calcutta was now finally fixed at one crore of rupees and that to be paid to its inhabitants for the plunder of their property at Rs 175 lakhs The Nawab agreed not to fortify the Hooghly below Calcutta and undertook to make over to the Company the settlements and factories of the French and to prevent them making any fresh settlements The only territorial concession made to the Company was the grant of some proprietary rights in Calcutta itself and of the zamindari

of the country as far south as Kalpi on the Hooghly—an area of 882 square miles, which formed the original 24-Parganas. For this tract the Company paid land revenue like any other zamindar.

While however the government remained with the Nawab and his officers, it soon became apparent that the real control rested with the British. The Nawab was dependent on them for the maintenance of his authority; they guided if they did not dictate his policy. Within 18 months of the battle of Plassey the imperial court at Delhi, anxious to secure regular remittances of revenue and aware that the Company alone was in a position to guarantee them, had made overtures to Clive offering the Diwani, by which the Company would have been an integral part of the Government, responsible for fiscal administration and possessing the power of the purse. Recognizing, though he did, that the Diwani would be a stepping stone to full sovereignty, Clive declined the offer for the present, as he saw no likelihood of the Company providing the forces necessary to uphold such a position.

He wrote however, to William Pitt on 7th January 1759 suggesting that direct British

rule should be established in Bengal and Bihar. Such a change, he pointed out, would be easy of accomplishment and welcome both to the people and the Mughal Emperor. Only 2,000 European troops would be required to overcome any opposition from the Nawab or his son. "There will be the less difficulty in bringing about such an event, as the natives themselves have no attachment whatever to particular princes, and as under the present Government they have no security for their lives or properties, they would rejoice in so happy an exchange as that of a mild for a despotic Government. That this would be agreeable to the Mughal can hardly be questioned, as it would be so much to his interest to have these countries under the dominion of a nation famed for their good faith, rather than in the hands of people who, as long experience has convinced him, never will pay him his proportion of the revenues, unless awed into it by the fear of the imperial army marching to force them thereto." Clive felt however, that such an undertaking was beyond the capacity of a commercial corporation like the Company. It required the backing of the British Government and the sanction of national authority, and it was on this



account that he approached Pitt. His suggestion was a remarkable anticipation of events but to Pitt it meant a leap in the dark for which he was not prepared.

**Difficulties of Mir Jafar Ali Khan** — Bengal submitted quietly to the new régime. A plot at Dacca to proclaim a son of Sarfaraz Khan as Nawab was nipped in the bud and a small rebellion in Purnea was easily suppressed. The attitude of Raja Ram Narayan Rai the Governor of Bihar was for some time uncertain and there was a risk of his assuming independence but early in 1758 Clive and Mir Jafar Ali Khan marched to Patna at the head of a large army. This display of force was effectual and Ram Narayan Rai gave in his allegiance. The Hindu Rajas of Bihar also made no move according to Monsieur Law because of the influence of the Jagat Seths. 'All these Rajas', he wrote in his memoirs, 'detest the Muhammadan Government and if it had not been for the Seths the famous bankers with whom they have close connections it is probable that after the revolution in which Siraj ud-daula was the victim they would all have risen together to establish a Hindu Government.'

Mir Jafar soon began to realize the difficulties of his position. He started his rule with an empty exchequer. In addition to the amounts due under his pact with Clive, enormous sums were paid to the naval and military forces of the Company while private donations to Clive, the Governor of Calcutta (Drake), and the members of the Council came, in English money, to £1,250,000, Clive's share alone being £234,000. The distribution of spoils in this way was a familiar incident of a revolution. The condition, for instance, on which Shaukat Jang was granted the office of Nawab was that he should send to Delhi the accumulated treasures of Siraj-ud-daula as well as a tribute of 3 crores a year, and Clive himself avowed that the receipt of presents under the circumstances was perfectly regular. "He never made," he said, "the least secret of the presents he had received, he acquainted the Court of Directors with it, and they, who are his masters, and were the only persons who had a right to object to his receiving those presents, approved of it."

The morality of the proceedings of Clive and his colleagues should be judged by the standards of their time. As admirably

explained by Mr Williamson in his *Short History of British Expansion* (1922) In the use to which they put their incredible victory later generations have found much that is sordid and shameful They enriched themselves they exploited their conquest for the benefit of their Company they showed little concern for the feeble population which produced the wealth they seized In this again they were but men of their age The man of action has little time in which to consider the ethics of his deeds He takes them ready made from his priests and philosophers And so far these latter classes in England and indeed in all Europe had made little protest against the empire-building methods of their days

Whatever the ethics of the question whether judged by the standards of those days or of the present the net result for Mir Jafar Khan was bankruptcy and he had neither the capacity nor the vigour to restore the finances The pleasures of the *zaiman* were more congenial to him than the cares of State His government was ineffective the administration was disorganized his army remained unpaid and in a chronic state of mutiny

**Invasion of the Shahzada.**—Early in 1759 an extraordinary little war broke out, the incidents of which illustrate the topsyturvy condition of the country and are almost like *opera bouffe*. The Emperor at this time Alamgir II was a *roi faineant*, entirely in the hands of one of his ministers. His son, Ali Gauhar, who was generally known by his title of Shahzada or imperial prince, determined to make a bid for independent power and to carve out a kingdom for himself in Bihar and Bengal. Having secured the support of the Governor of Allahabad, he marched into Bihar, where he was joined by some disaffected noblemen, who had a large following. Mir Jafar's army, with its pay long in arrears, was in mutiny at the time. Mir Jafar wanted to buy off the Shahzada, but could not raise the money. He begged the Marathas to come to his aid, and finally appealed to Clive to drive out the Shahzada. Clive had also been approached by the Shahzada and the Emperor. The Shahzada asked for his support, in return for which he offered large concessions. On the other hand, the Emperor sent a message urging him to march against his rebellious son.

Leaving Calcutta with a force of 450 Europeans and 2500 sepoy Clive settled the mutiny in the Nawab's army by getting their arrears of pay made over to them and then marched to Patna with his own small force and the Nawab's troops under Miran. Patna was by this time invested but the Shahzada raised the siege on hearing of Clive's approach and of the capture of Allahabad in his rear a loss which threatened his communications. On this the confederacy broke up and the different contingents dispersed. The invasion had proved merely a raid and the Shahzada himself a broken adventurer actually wrote to Clive asking for money to enable him to make his retreat. Acting on the saying that one should make a golden bridge for a flying enemy Clive sent him 500 gold mohurs with the help of which he made his way into Bundelkhand. Clive cleared the broken forces of the rebels out of South Bihar while a detachment drove back the Marathas from Midnapore when they had appeared as Mir Jafar's allies and remained to plunder. Mir Jafar rewarded Clive's services with the grant of the 24 Parganas as a jagir or fief so making him the superior landlord of the Company. The

latter in fact paid Clive land revenue till his death in 1774, when the full proprietary rights were vested in the Company. -

**War with the Dutch, 1759.**—Mir Jafar Ali Khan had been loth to call in the British against the Shahzada and only did so as a last resort when Patna was threatened. A party hostile to the British had gained the upper hand at his court. According to a memorandum written by Holwell in 1760, they were daily planning schemes to shake off their dependence on the English and continually urging to the Nawab that till this was effected, his government was a name only. Their diagnosis of the situation was perfectly correct, and the remedy they sought was the intervention of a foreign power. Before the end of 1758 negotiations were opened with the Dutch to send a force from Batavia, with which the Nawab's army would co-operate, to drive out the English. The Dutch, who had long chafed at the rise of the British power and the diminution of their own, welcomed the invitation. It was immaterial to them that Holland and Great Britain were at peace, unofficial war had long been a normal incident of trade rivalry in the East.

In October 1759 a fleet of seven Dutch men of war with 700 European and 800 Malay troops on board sailed up the Hooghly. The garrison of Calcutta had been weakened by the despatch of troops to join in the war against the French in the Northern Circars. Clive could muster not more than 250 European infantry, a company of artillery 60 strong and 1 200 sepoy, and there were only three Indiamen in the river. He cleared the river by warning Mir Jafar Khan that this was a war which the British and the Dutch must fight out between themselves. Mir Jafar Khan failed to give the Dutch the support which they counted on and the expedition ended in total failure.

The three Indiamen sunk or took six of the Dutch men of war in an action worthy of the best traditions of British seamanship. One of the British vessels had 90 shots in her hull and her rigging was cut to pieces but not a man was killed owing to the protection afforded by closely packed bags of saltpetre. The Dutch troops which had been landed and were on the march to Chinsura were now left without a base and the defeat by Colonel Forde of the Dutch garrison which called for

to meet them prevented a junction Forde met the main body at Bedarra near Chinsura and cut them to pieces Only 14 escaped to Chinsura, the rest being killed, wounded or prisoners

The hope of Dutch dominion in Bengal was thus finally extinguished and the British were left with their supremacy unchallenged by any European nation The expedition, which merely served to show the impotence of the Dutch and the strength of the British, in no way disturbed the relations of the two powers in Europe

**War with the Emperor Shah Alam, 1760-61.**—Early in 1760 Bihar was again invaded by the Shahzada, who, on his father's death, proclaimed himself Emperor with the designation of Shah Alam He was now in a very different position He had the prestige of the imperial name and could count on support both in Bihar and Bengal, for Mir Jafar Khan had by this time made himself and his family so universally hated that, it was said, there was hardly a man who did not wish success to the Emperor The disaffected chiefs of South Bihar flocked to his banners, and he was soon in command of an army of



nearly 40,000 men. He scored an initial victory over the forces of the Governor of Bihar and a small British detachment in a battle fought at Mohsinpur in the Patna district and invested the city of Patna, but soon met with defeat near Bihar at the hands of an allied force which marched up from Bengal under Miran and Colonel Caillaud. The latter shortly afterwards took over command of the Company's forces when Clive returned to England.

The Emperor now suddenly struck through the hills south of Monghyr into Bengal which was in real danger. It was simultaneously invaded by a Maratha army which overrunning Midnapore established itself at Vishnupur in the Bankura district. Murshidabad was practically defenceless. The Governor of Purnea was in revolt and other zamindars were preparing to join the Emperor in disgust at Mir Jafar Khan's misrule.

The Emperor got within 30 miles of Murshidabad and effected a junction with the Marathas but hesitated to attack the town. Time was given for Miran's and Caillaud's forces to come up from Bihar and he then marched back to Patna. There he was joined by a party of Frenchmen under Law under

whose direction the siege of Patna was vigorously pushed on. The city was saved by the arrival of a body of 200 Europeans under Captain Knox, which covered the distance of 300 miles from Burdwan in 13 days—a fine feat considering that he had to make forced marches in the fierce heat of May.

The enemy were driven off but a new danger was presented by the appearance on the north bank of the Ganges of an army of 12,000 men, with 30 guns, which came up under the Governor of Purnea to join the Emperor. Before it could cross the river Knox, with his small force, 5 guns and 300 horse, under a gallant Hindu Maharaja, Shitab Rai, attacked it and drove it back. The fierce courage of Shitab Rai in this battle evoked the warm admiration of Knox, who, as they returned, covered with blood and dust, exclaimed to the assembled officers “This is a real Nabob. I never saw such a Nabob in my life.”

The arrival of the main force under Miran and Caillaud removed any further danger to Patna, and the Purnea army was driven out of Tirhut in a campaign in which Miran and his troops are said to have behaved in their usual manner, keeping about a mile in the

rear when an action was in progress. During it Miran met his death being killed by lightning which set fire to his tent. There was some suspicion at the time that he was assassinated and his tent fired during a thunder storm to remove traces of the crime but apparently this suspicion was groundless. Caillaud managed to keep the leaderless army together had it been disbanded Bihar would have been lost. As it was the districts of Patna and Gaya remained in the occupation of the Emperor whose agents collected revenue from the inhabitants almost up to the walls of Patna. It was impossible to proceed against him for after their return from Tirhut both the Nawab's army and the British sepoys whose pay was long in arrears refused to serve and many deserted to the Emperor. It was not till after October 1760 when Mir Jafar was deposed Mir Kasim Ali installed and the troops paid that the campaign could be resumed.

A concerted movement against the Emperor and his adherents was now made. The Marathas were forced to evacuate Mithapur. The Raja of Birlhum who had taken the field with an army of 20,000 for at

5,000 horse, was crushed by Mir Kasim Ali and a British force. A small detachment from Monghyr cleared the Kharagpur Hills of another rebel force numbering about 5,000 under the Raja of Kharagpur. In January 1761, the Emperor, who had made his headquarters at the town of Bihar, was routed by Colonel Carnac (who had succeeded Caillaud in the command), and Monsieur Law and his French officers taken prisoners. The Emperor had to retreat through a country already stripped bare by his troops, provisions failed, his followers deserted him. He came to terms with the British, or rather threw himself on their protection, and was taken to Patna. There an impromptu ceremonial was held in the factory, which was converted for the occasion into an imperial durbar hall with a couple of dinner tables to serve as a throne. Mir Kasim Ali acknowledged him as Emperor and was formally invested with the Subahdari of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, for which he promised an annual revenue of Rs 24 lakhs. The Emperor then left to attempt the recovery of Delhi with the assistance of the Nawab Wazir of Oudh, who had embraced his cause.

**Deposition of Mir Jafar Ali Khan**—In January 1757 Clive had recorded his opinion that Mir Jafar still retained his attachment to the British but even then he had removed from their offices men who were favourable to the British connexion and Clive recognized that his defection might take place at any time. Two years later there was a long count of treachery and misrule against him. He had conspired with the Dutch he and his son had according to Holwell set no bounds to their cruelties oppressions and exactions in spite of Clive's remonstrances. His atrocious murder of the relatives of Ali Vardi Khan and Sirajud-daula (including Sirajud-daula's mother widow and infant daughter) had sent a thrill of horror through the country. Owing to misrule and consequent anarchy the fortunes of the Company were at a very low ebb it could scarcely pay its way and even when its troops were on active service money for their pay was not forthcoming.

A climax was reached when the unpaid troop at Patna refused to take the field against the Emperor and the army of Mir Jafar broke out in open rebellion.

besieged him in his palace. The first experiment of the British in king-making had ended in ghastly failure, and soon after Vansittart took over charge as Governor for the Company, it was resolved to make a change and to set up the son-in-law of Mir Jafar Khan, Mir Kasim Ali, in his place. Mir Jafar Khan was forced to abdicate and, resistance being hopeless, retired to Chitpore—a change which was universally popular.

A pact was made with Mir Kasim Ali by which he undertook to discharge the obligations of Mir Jafar Khan and to cede to the Company the districts of Burdwan (which included Hooghly and Howrah), Midnapore and Chittagong. Their revenues, together with half the annual produce of lime at Sylhet, were to defray the cost of the Company's army, which was to be kept up for the protection of the country and the maintenance of the Government. The usual presents to the chief officers of the Company followed but were on a much more modest scale than when Mir Jafar Khan paid for his elevation. According to a letter from the Court of Directors, written in 1763, Mir Kasim Ali made an offer of Rs 20 lakhs to Vansittart and the

Select Committee which they honourably refused

**The power of the local Rajas** —The war with the Emperor serves to show that the great zamindars especially in Bihar, still held the position of semi independent chiefs or mediaeval barons commanding thousands of armed retainers and able to put large levies in the field. These forces were formidable mainly from their numbers for they were unable to stand up against disciplined troops and were more like the rabble armies maintained at the present time by the local Governors of provinces in China. In Bengal the great Rajas were neither so numerous nor so dangerous as in Bihar but the Raja of Birbhum as we have seen was at the head of a large army and the Raja of Burdwan was equally powerful. In 1760 he threatened to join forces with the Marathas and with the help of other zamindars to seize the capital of Murshidabad. He actually raised levies amounting to 10 000 to 15 000 men with the apparent intention which was not fulfilled of joining the Raja of Birbhum. Even as late as 1767 his armed retainers numbered over 8 500.

**Rule of Mir Kasim Ali.**—In Mir Kasim Ali the British made a good selection, for he proved himself as vigorous and capable as Mir Jafar Ali Khan had been weak and incompetent. His reforms in the administration were so effective that within 18 months he had discharged his financial obligations to the Company and established his authority in the districts. The army was reduced by the discharge of the irregular troops which formed an insubordinate rabble. A new army, well drilled and disciplined under Armenian officers, and, what was equally important, regularly paid, was created. The capital was transferred to Monghyr, perhaps for strategic reasons, for it commanded communications with the north-west of India and the province of Bihar, which had been a storm centre for years past. His accessibility and justice were in accordance with the best traditions of Islamic rulers. The *Siyar-ul-Mutakharin* extols him as a terror to wrongdoers, as well as to his enemies, and eulogizes him as an incomparable man and the most extraordinary prince of his age, while admitting that he was ever prone to confiscation of property, confinement of persons and effusion of blood. His methods were



despotic but it may be doubted whether order could have been evolved from the prevailing chaos without drastic measures and his severity appears to have been mainly directed against corrupt officials and rebel zamindars. Their vacant offices and confiscated estates were generally bestowed on Muhammadans for Mir Kasim Ali inspired by fear of Hindu intrigues pursued an anti-Hindu policy. Among those who fell were Ram Narayan Rai the Governor of Bihar who was charged with misappropriation of the revenues.

**The evils of divided authority**—No effective government however was possible under the system of divided authority which prevailed after the battle of Plassey. The Nawab had responsibility without full power the British enjoyed *de facto* control without responsibility. The Nawab's rights were constantly encroached upon and he complained in 1762— "From my first accession to the government I have perceived that the country was not in my own hand. The cause of the country not being in my hand is this—that from the factory of Calcutta to Comharzar Path and Dava all the

English chiefs with their *gomastas*, officers and agents in every district of the government act as collectors, renters, zamindars and *talukdars* and setting up the Company's colours allow no power to my officers" The justice of his complaint was endorsed by the Governor, Vansittart, himself, who declared that scarcely a day passed but occasion was taken, upon the most trifling pretences, to trample upon his Government, to seize his officers and to insult them He regarded Kasim Ali Khan as an injured party, whose conduct from the beginning of his government had been irreproachable except in a few instances which might be excused by the distress and despair to which he was driven

The cause of the trouble was the rapacity of the Company's officers, who received nominal salaries and were allowed to supplement them by trading on their own account Under the charters granted by the Mughal Government, the Company's trade, which was foreign, was exempt from customs duties This exemption applied only to exports and imports covered by a pass, called *dastak*, issued by the Governor or any factory agent and not to inland trade, which was subject to

transit duties at variable rates they ranged from 10 to 20 per cent *ad valorem*. After 1757 the Company's officers took advantage of their position to claim exemption for their private inland trade and did not scruple to enforce this preposterous claim by violence seizing and imprisoning any of the Nawab's officers who stopped their boats and endeavoured to levy the proper duty.

Gross abuses followed. Indian traders paying heavy duties could not compete against rivals whose goods paid none. Many consequently paid the Company's officers for the privilege of trading in their name or getting passes from them. The authority of the Nawab was set at naught and the revenues defrauded by Indians as well as Europeans. Warren Hastings now a Member of the Council at Calcutta found on a journey up the Ganges that every boat which he passed flew the English flag and the oppression of the people was not confined to our dependents alone but practised all over the country by people falsely assuming the habits of our sepoys or calling themelves our *agents*.

Under the feeble rule of Mir Jafar Khan these abuses had gone on unchecked. Mir

Kasim Ali was a man of a different stamp, anxious to be a real and effective ruler, and he vigorously protested against the constant infringement of his authority. Vansittart recognized his just grievances but was powerless to redress them. He had only one supporter on the Council, Warren Hastings. The rest of the members were themselves engaged in trade and subordinated justice to their own interests. When Warren Hastings protested against the abuses of the system, he was charged by one of them, Batson, with acting the part rather of a retained solicitor of the Nawab than of a servant of the Company or a British subject. In the altercation which ensued Batson gave Hastings the lie and struck him in open meeting.

8 000 foot Reinforcements sent by Mir Kasim Ali brought up his army to the strength of 40 000 but it suffered another signal defeat at Udhua Nala 6 miles south Rajmahal after which Mir Kasim Ali fell back on Patna

**The massacre of Patna, 1763** — Infuriated by his reverses Mir Kasim Ali gave the savage part of his nature free play. On leaving Monghyr he put to death a number of his prisoners including Ram Narayan Rai the late Governor of Bihar. At Barh on the march to Patna the two chiefs of the Seth house of bankers who had been brought up prisoners from Murshidabad were hacked to pieces and indignity followed death for their bodies were exposed to the birds and beasts to prevent cremation according to the rite of their religion. At Patna as soon as he heard of the capture of Monghyr Mir Kasim Ali ordered all his British prisoners to be put to death and his orders were executed by one of his European officers. This brute was a German or Alsatian of Strasburg Reinhardt by name whose swarthy skin and sullen scowl had earned him the soubriquet of 'Sombre corrupted into Saur' by which name he is usually known. He had already given



**Expulsion of Mir Kasim Ali**—About a month later Patna was taken by Major Adams. Mir Kasim Ali still had an army of 30 000 men but desertions were going on fast, and he fled to Oudh, where he sought and received the protection of the Nawab Wazir Shuja ud-daula. The brief and brilliant campaign of Adams who died soon afterwards was thus brought to a successful issue.

Amongst says Captain Broome in the *History of the Bengal Army* the numerous able and distinguished men who have upheld the honour of the English arms in this country there is not one whose career of success is more remarkable than that of Major Adams. With a limited force of the native portion of which the majority were raw recruits all supplied with stores and with an empty treasure chest he entered upon and brought to conclusion a campaign against a Prince who possessed the most perfect and regular army hitherto seen in India consisting of disciplined and well-appointed infantry an organized body of cavalry and an excellent park of artillery manned by Europeans with the further advantage of possessing every iron held in the country and commanding the whole line of communication.

and supply, and, last though not least, possessing the regard and good will of the people who, whatever may have been his other crimes, had reason to be grateful for the moderation and justice with which they had been invariably treated under his rule

“ In spite of these difficulties, Major Adams in little more than four months made himself master of the entire provinces of Bengal and Behar from Calcutta to the Karumnassa, expelled Meer Kossim Khan from the country, dispersed his troops, having defeated them in two well-contested pitched battles in the open plain against fearful numerical odds, carried four strongly-fortified positions by siege or assault, captured together between 400 and 500 pieces of cannon, and supplied and equipped his army from the enemy's stores. It is impossible to look back without admiration and surprise upon this march of a handful of European and native troops, advancing in one uninterrupted course of triumph and success through a hostile country, in the face of a numerous, brave and disciplined army, marching over such an extent of country in the most trying season of the year and only ceasing their labours



when there was no longer an enemy in the field

**Battle of Buxar, 1764** —Next year Bihar was invaded by the joint forces of Shuja ud daula, Mir Kasim Ali and the Emperor Shah Alam who was also seeking to secure his throne under the protection of the Nawab Wazir at the time the most powerful prince in northern India. Repulsed at Patna they fell back on Buxar where they were signally defeated by the Company's army under Major (later Sir) Hector Munro in a hard fought battle. Whether judged from its military aspects or its political effects this may be regarded as a greater battle than that of Plassey in which a facile victory was largely the result of treachery. The disproportion of the combatants was equally great Munro having only 7 000 men against at least 40 000 to 50 000 but the enemy's forces were of much better calibre than those of Siraj ud daula for they included disciplined battalions under European officers, warlike Rohillas, a strong park of artillery and a splendid corps of 5 000 Durani horse composed of veterans who had served under Ahmad Shah Abdali, Nadir Shah. Never in Clive's history

did the troops of India fight so well, and the casualties in the Company's army, amounting to approximately one in every eight men, show what a stricken field it was

As for the political effects of the two battles, Plassey secured the ascendancy of the British in Bengal and Bihar, but no further. Outside those limits it appears to have been regarded lightly. At Delhi Monsieur Law found in 1758 that the revolution which followed that victory was ascribed entirely to the Seths and Rai Durlabh Rai. "Clive's name was well known. He was, they said, a great captain whom the Seths had brought from very far at a great expense to deliver Bengal from the tyranny of Siraj-ud-daula, as Salabat Jang had engaged Monsieur Bussy to keep the Marathas in order. Many of the principal persons even asked me what country he came from." The victory at Buxar not only disposed of the claims of Mir Kasim Ali, but laid Oudh at the feet of the victors—it was, in fact, soon overrun—and brought the Emperor a suppliant into their camp, and despite his lack of real power, the Emperor still stood for authority. Defeat at such a distance from their base would probably have meant ruin for the British. Victory brought

supremacy as was well recognized by Clive, who declared that it was scarcely hyperbole to say that to-morrow the whole Mughal empire is in our power

**The causes of British supremacy**—It will not be out of place at this stage to give a conspectus of the main factors which helped to place the British in a position of predominance. These were briefly the disruption of the Mughal Empire the passive submission of a people long schooled to subjection, the military organization of the British and their reserve of sea power. With the break up of the Mughal Empire the country had relapsed into a gladiatorial state—the good old rule the simple plan that he should take who has the power and he should keep who can. The bonds of centralized government having been loosed the only force left was military force and it remained for the best organised power to establish itself.

The Indian armies of the time were composed of levies undisciplined and irregularly paid subsisting largely on plunder. Their weakness against European troops had long been noticed by European observers. In the latter half of the seventeenth century Bernard

could never see the Mughal armies " destitute of order and marching with the irregularity of a herd of animals " without reflecting on the ease with which 25,000 French veterans would overcome them Manucci in the reign of Aurangzeb declared that nothing beyond a corps of 30,000 trusty European soldiers, led by competent commanders, was required to sweep away the Mughal power and occupy the whole country The British did not command these numbers, but they proved what fine fighting material there was in the sepoy with proper discipline, good leadership and a stiffening of European troops Hector Munro, indeed, in an army order of 1764, declared it as his opinion that " a regular discipline and strict obedience is the only superiority Europeans possess in this country over the natives " The Marathas, the only Indian power which might have seriously challenged the British, had been crippled with the crushing defeat they sustained at Panipat in 1761, and in any case they were a disruptive rather than a constructive force

The general position has been illustrated by Sir John Seeley in a striking analogy. " We may suppose that a number of Parsee merchants in Bombay, tired of the anarchy

which disturbed their trade, had subscribed together to establish fortresses and raise troops and then that they had the good fortune to employ able generals. In that case they too, might have had their Plassey and Buxar they too might have extorted from the Great Mogul the Dewannee or financial administration of a province and so laid the foundation of an empire which might in time have extended over all India. To this it may be added that the Company had the backing of sea power. It was the last that enabled the Company to re-establish itself in Bengal in 1757 and to eliminate French rivalry by the capture of Chandernagore.

The ease with which Bengal could be annexed by a nation with naval power had already been pointed out by a Colonel James Mill in proposals for its conquest which he submitted to the Emperor of Austria in 1748. After remarking that the Mughal had a poor fighting force on land with no maritime power and that Bengal was held by a rebel subject (Ali Vardi Khan) he observed — Bengal though not to be reduced by the power of the Mughal is equally undefensible with the rest of Hindustan on the side of the ocean and consequently may be forced out of the rebels.

hand with all its wealth, which is incredibly vast” He estimated, indeed, that three ships with 1,500 or 2,000 regular troops would be sufficient for its conquest The British were animated by no such schemes of conquest Even after the recapture of Calcutta they were content to enter into a treaty which restored the *status quo ante* with some security for the future Hostilities were resumed for self-preservation on the invitation of the chief subjects of the Nawab, and the consequent ascendancy of the British was the result of an internal revolution Seven years after the battle of Plassey it was endangered by the strong combination of Shuja-ud-daula, Mir Kasim Ali, and the Emperor, and it was not till this confederacy had been defeated at Buxar that the British could be assured of being a dominant power in northern India

## CHAPTER VII

Dyarchy, 1765—72.

**The reinstatement of Mir Jafar Ali Khan**—On the outbreak of war with Mir Kasim Ali in 1763 Mir Jafar Ali Khan had been brought out of retirement and reinstalled as Nawab. He again paid heavily for his elevation and the Company's servants remained in the privileged position of carrying on trade free of the duties which Indian merchants paid. Mir Jafar was quite content to fill the familiar role of a puppet Nawab and died in January 1765 when he was succeeded by his eldest surviving son Najm ud-daula.

**Clive's policy outside Bengal**—Clive arrived in Calcutta in May of the latter year with full power to put the Company's affairs in order. He had entirely given up the imperialistic ideas which he had expressed to Pitt in 1759 and was opposed to territorial aggrandisement. His policy cannot be better explained than in his own words: "We have at last arrived at the critical period which I

have long foreseen, that period which renders it necessary to determine whether we can or shall take the whole to ourselves Jafar Ali Khan (the Nawab of Bengal) is dead and his natural son is a minor, Sujah Daulah (Vizier of Oudh) is beat from his dominions, we are in possession of it, and it is scarcely hyperbole to say that to-morrow the whole Mughal empire is in our power The inhabitants of the country have no attachment to any obligation, their forces are neither disciplined, commanded nor paid as ours are Can it then be doubted that a large army of Europeans would effectually preserve us sovereigns?" He rejected however the prospect of empire as impracticable "If ideas of conquest were to be the rule of our conduct, I foresee that we should, by necessity, be led from acquisition to acquisition until we had the whole empire up in arms against us Nothing, therefore, but extreme necessity ought to induce us to extend our ideas of territorial acquisitions beyond the amount of those ceded by Kasim Ali Khan My resolution was, and my hope will be, to confine our assistance, our conquests and our possessions to Bengal, Bihar and Orissa To go farther is, in my opinion, a scheme so extravagantly ambitious



and absurd that no Governor and Council in their senses can adopt it unless the whole system of the Company's interest be first entirely remodelled

His final decision was 'to conciliate the affections of the country powers to remove any jealousy they may have of our unbounded ambition and to convince them that we aim not at conquest and dominion but security in carrying on a free trade In pursuance of this policy Oudh was restored to the Nawab Vizier with the exception of two districts Allahabad and Kora which were given to the Emperor for his demesne and Oudh continued till the end of the century to serve as a buffer State between Bihar and the north west of India

**Clive's policy in Bengal** —In regard to the administration of Bengal Clive's policy was to maintain the authority of the Nawab but to secure the revenues of the country for the Company and to prevent revolutions by depriving him of all military power To quote his own words (1765)— Our young Nalob who is the issue of a prostitute who has little abilities and less education to supply the want of them mean weak and ignorant

as this man is, he would, if left to himself and a few of his artful flatterers, pursue the very paths of his predecessors. It is impossible therefore to trust him with power and be safe. If you mean to maintain your present possessions and advantages, the command of the army and receipt of the revenues must be kept in your hands." The Company, he said, could never return to its original state of dependency without ceasing to exist. If the Nawab were allowed to have forces, he would soon raise money. If he were allowed a full treasury without forces, he would certainly make use of it to invite the Marathas or other powers to invade Bengal and restore him to sovereignty.

"The power of supervising the provinces, though lodged in us, should not, in my opinion, be exerted. Three times the number of civil servants would be insufficient for the purpose. If we leave the management to the old officers of the government, the abuses inevitably springing from the exercise of territorial authority will be effectually obviated, there will still be a Nabob with an allowance suitable to his dignity, and the territorial jurisdiction will still be in the chiefs of the country, acting under him and the Presidency in

conjunction though the revenues will belong to the Company. Besides were the Company's officers to be Collectors foreign nations would immediately take umbrage, and complaints preferred to the British Court might be attended with very embarrassing consequences. Nor can it be supposed that either the French Dutch or Danes will acknowledge the English Company Nabob of Bengal and pay into the hands of their servants the duties upon trade or the quit rent of those districts which they have for many years possessed by virtue of the royal firman and or by grants from former Nabobs. His solution of the problem was to assume the Diwani and to retain the revenues after paying tribute to the Emperor and an allowance to the Nawab.

Revolutions he said are no more to be apprehended the means of effecting them will in future be wanting to ambitious Mussalman.

**Assumption of the Diwani**—In 1756 the Wazir of the Emperor had invited Clive to accept the Diwani or financial administration of Bengal Bihar and Orissa on behalf of the Company in the hope that this would ensure the remittance of revenue to Delhi.

This offer was renewed in 1761 and 1763 Clive now determined to accept the Diwani for the Company, and it was formally bestowed in 1765 by the Emperor, who, for his part, received tribute of Rs 26,00,000 a year—a windfall for him, for hitherto he had received nothing from the three provinces. The Company thus had at last a definite status in the system of the Mughal Empire and occupied the extraordinarily anomalous position of being a Company under a charter granted by the King of England and also an office-bearer under the Mughal Emperor. To add to the anomaly, the Mughal Empire existed only in name, and Orissa, of which the Company was now formally constituted the Diwan, was under the rule of the Marathas.

**The meaning of the Diwani.**—It has been explained in a previous chapter that the control of the provincial government under the Mughals was vested in two co-ordinate authorities, *viz*, the Nazim and the Diwan, each responsible for different branches of the administration and with separate staffs. The Nawab or Viceroy, as Nazim or Subahdar, (often called Soubah by the English), was the executive head of the

Government, he controlled the army and the police and supervised the administration of justice except in cases relating to land. The Diwan was in charge of the fiscal administration; he was responsible for the finances of the province, the collection of revenues and the provision of funds for the maintenance of the military and civil services; he also supervised the administration of justice in cases in which the right to landed property was at issue.

Nominally Clive continued this system which is commonly referred to as dual government or Clive's dual system. There were however two important deviations from the previous system. The first was that the Nawab no longer had the control of the army. This was entirely under the Company, which thus had command both of the sword and of the purse. The second was that the Company did not discharge its full responsibilities as Diwan. The Court of Directors insisted like Clive that the exercise of the Diwani was to be confined to the collection and disposal of the revenue. They specifically laid down that the ordinary bounds of control should extend to nothing but the superintending the collection of the revenue and the

receiving the money from the Nabob's treasury to that of the Dewanny or the Company The administration of justice, the appointment of officers, zemindarries—in short, whatever comes under the denomination of civil administration—we understand is to remain in the hands of the Nabob or his ministers ”

The Select Committee, which now largely replaced the Council as the controlling authority, protested that the Directors left them without any choice of measures, freedom of action or power of reformation Verelst, who succeeded Clive as Governor in 1769, similarly complained of the peremptory orders by which the Company's officers were enjoined to preserve the primitive character of merchants with scrupulous delicacy and were forbidden to avow any public authority over the officers of Government

**The organization of government.**—The Nawab himself was merely a titular ruler The young decadent, who succeeded Mir Jafar Ali Khan, had no idea of exercising real authority and was perfectly content to be a mere annuitant, drawing an allowance which was in the first instance fixed at Rs 54,00,000

a year His comment on hearing of the allotment of this princely stipend was characteristic— Thank God I shall now have as many dancing girls as I please He left the task of government in the hands of the Naib (or Deputy) Nazim Muhammad Reza Khan who was also Naib Diwan of Bengal under the Company and thus concentrated in his person full executive authority There was a Board of Advice associated with the Nawab consisting of three members who were commonly referred to as the Ministers viz Muhammad Reza Khan Raja Durlabh Ram and the head of the Seth family of bankers but Muhammad Reza Khan was the dominating personality and his colleagues did not interfere with his discretion All the officers in the Nawab's government such as judges magistrates and police officers were Indians and Clive insisted that the Company was never to interfere in the appointment or complaint of any officer of the Government

The Company was represented at the Nawab's court by a Resident whose duty it was to see to the provision of funds for the administration to check encroachments on the Nawab's branch of government and also to

to prevent the oppression of the people, he was, however, vested with no power to carry out this last laudable object

The highest authority in the Diwani was the Select Committee consisting of four Members of Council under the Governor as President. This Committee took over the conduct of political affairs from the Council and was also given the superior control of the revenue administration. Its exercise of control was, however, as already stated, restricted by the Directors, and the actual administration of this part of the Government was left to the Naib or Deputy Diwans, Muhammad Reza Khan for Bengal and Maharaja Shitab Rai for Bihar. The revenue officers under them were entirely Indian, the Company's officers having nothing to do with the revenue administration (till 1769 when supervisors were introduced), except in the 24-Parganas and in the three districts which had been ceded by Mir Kasim Ali, *viz*, Burdwan (which included the modern districts of Hooghly and Howrah), Midnapore and Chittagong, where they were entirely in charge of the assessment and collection of revenue.



**The defects of the system** — Both branches of the Government were thus administered by Indians throughout the greater part of Bengal and Bihar and neither the Nawab nor the Company discharged the proper functions of a government. Both alike would neither govern nor abdicate. The Nawab was a figure-head the Company exercised no effective control over the officers to whom the administration was entrusted. The Directors were insistent in demands for revenue but would undertake no responsibility for the machinery by which it was raised. The British Parliament's intervention was limited to a requisition of £400 000 a year under Charles Townsend's Act of 1767 the raising of which was an additional burden.

The Select Committee itself was fully alive to the viciousness of the system and enumerated its defects in an illuminating minute. It was they declared deficient in every particular which was requisite to defend the poor from the injustice and oppression of the strong and under the Directors' orders they were powerless to reform it. The actual defects were stated categorically —

(1) The want of sufficient checks over the instruments of government who were

generally adventurers from Persia, strangers to the customs and indifferent to the welfare of the people

(2) The concentration of authority in the hands of "one or a few" Power without control was too dangerous to be entrusted to "any three ministers or rather one single man," *i.e.*, Muhammad Reza Khan

(3) The Committee's ignorance of the produce of the country, they were deliberately kept in a state of ignorance by a set of men whose interest it was to deceive them

(4) The train of dependents and underlings kept by the collectors of revenue

(5) The consequent oppression of the ryots by a multitude of *gomastas* (agents) and their dependents

(6) The collusion of the revenue collectors with the zemindars

(7) General venality, which formed part of the genius of the people

They declared, however, that "in Burdwan and the rest of the Company's proprietary lands, where we ourselves have been the managers, plenty, content, population, increase of revenue without increase of burden, are now

the effects. They urged that the same or a similar system should be extended by appointing a gentleman of the Company's service in every district to supervise the collection of revenue.

**The mask of dyarchy**—Though the form of a dyarchy was maintained the actual power rested with the Company. The latter was in the position of a dictator whose power was masked by the Mughal system of government. Clive himself had no doubts as to the true position. In the letter in which he and the Select Committee announced the assumption of the Diwani they declared that there could be no division of power. All must either belong to the Company or the Nabob. The hollowness of the pretence was further exposed in the final minute which Clive signed before retiring in 1767. We are sensible that since the acquisition of the Diwani the power belonging to the Subah of these provinces is totally and in fact vested in the East India Company. Nothing remains to him but the name and shadow of authority. The name however and this shadow it is not dispensably necessary we should seem with

venerate. Under the sanction of a Soubah every encroachment that may be attempted by foreign powers can effectually be crushed without any apparent interposition of our own authority, and all real grievances complained of can, through the same channel, be examined into and redressed. Be it therefore always remembered that there is a Soubah and that, though the revenues belong to the Company, the territorial jurisdiction must still rest in the chiefs of the country acting under him and the Presidency in conjunction. To appoint the Company's servants to the offices of Collectors, or, indeed, to do any act by an exertion of the English power which can equally be done by the Nabob at our instance, would be throwing off the mask, would be declaring the Company Soubah of the provinces."

It is difficult not to admit the justice of Mill's dry remark that to Clive's mind a certain degree of crooked artifice seems to have presented itself pretty congenially in the light of profound and skilful politics. Clive appears to have been obsessed by the idea that this game of make-believe was necessary to prevent complications with foreign powers. If

the Company took over the Government other European nations might, he thought, take umbrage refuse to admit the Company's sovereignty and withhold payment of customs etc But considering that the only army was that maintained by the Company, it is hard to credit his statement that encroachments by foreign powers could be crushed without the Company's intervention

In justice to Clive it must be said that he had a single eye to the interest of the Company which he conceived as the maximum of revenue with the minimum of obligation—the possession of power without the acknowledgment of responsibility Nowhere does he seem to put forward the good of the governed as a guiding principle Even moreover when the defects of the system were apparent he was opposed to any change in it asserting— The present form of government will not in my opinion admit of variation The distinction between the Company and Nalob must be carefully maintained and every measure wherein the country Government shall even seem to be concerned must be carried on in the name of the Nalob and by his authority In

short, I would have all the Company's servants, the supervisors excepted, confined entirely to commercial matters only upon the plan laid down in the time of Aliverdy Khan "

**The question of direct government.**—The policy of the Company openly assuming the whole government had been urged by Holwell Writing in 1765 from his retirement in England he pointed out that the country was exhausted by long years of warfare and recurring revolutions by which different Nawabs had been installed as Subahdars Bengal, he said, suffered from " the ringing changes on Soubahs " and the Company itself got little substantial advantage It was, however, " capable of being restored under a proper settled Government and lasting peace Let us boldly dare to be Soubah ourselves Our own terms have been more than once offered to us by the Emperor Why should we longer hesitate to accept them ?"

The suggestion was, however, impracticable, for the simple reason that the Company had not the men necessary for the work of administration As Verelst pointed out, it would have been impossible for the Company to have taken the Diwani (apart from the

Nizamat) into the hands of its own staff because its strength was barely sufficient for even the current commercial business. Its numbers had been seriously reduced by deaths first in the Black Hole of Calcutta and more recently by the massacre of Patna. Owing to these losses a large proportion were juniors. Clive contemptuously referred to the young gentlemen at Calcutta as being of an age when the laws of their own country adjudged them unfit to manage their own affairs to the extent of forty shillings. When the experiment of Supervisors was tried the men appointed were so young that Warren Hastings called them the boys of the service. They were accustomed to the methods of the counting-house and having neither training nor experience of civil administration were totally unfit for it.

**The difficulties of administration** — Allowance must also be made for the difficulties caused by the disorganization of Government in consequence of long war or warfare and revolution. Since 1712 there had been only one brief interlude of peace — from 1751 to 1756 and it would have been surprising if the system of administration always

loosely knit, had not been still further impaired by the unsettled conditions which prevailed. The defectiveness of the organization may be realized from the description given by Warren Hastings in 1772. "The Nazims exacted what they could from the zemindars and great farmers of the revenue, whom they left at liberty to plunder all below them, reserving to themselves the prerogative of plundering them in their turn, when they were supposed to have enriched themselves with the spoils of the country."

The Rajas and zemindars were largely out of hand. One of the first measures which had to be taken after the assumption of the Diwani was a military expedition (1766) into Champaran, where many of the zemindars, taking advantage of the weakness of the Government, had shut themselves up in their strongholds and refused to pay any revenue. Three of the regular battalions of the army had to be detached in 1765 to enable the revenue to be collected and ensure internal security. It was soon found that they were insufficient to meet the demands for military assistance which came from the different districts. The army, already inconvenienced by having to detail detachments to meet these



Mr Lucas pertinently remarks in his *Historical Geography of the British Colonies (South and East Africa)* It seems transparently obvious that if employers are to be honestly served they must pay good wages yet the history of colonial administration abundantly shows that no lesson has been so imperfectly learnt and so constantly forgotten Have few officers work them hard pay them well hold them responsible--this is the only way to secure capable and honest administrators In the latter part of the seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century no Government acted on these lines and companies could hardly be expected to do so Their business was not to train just and wise rulers but to buy the services of their staff as cheaply as possible They paid salaries on which men could hardly live and the subject races had to make good the deficiency

**The Army**—Clive did however succeed in infusing a new spirit into the army the officers of which were in an insubordinate state owing to the reduction of the field allowance (*batta*) which had been doubled by Mir Jafar Ali Khan By prompt and stern measures he crushed a combination and

them in 1766, which nearly culminated in open mutiny. It is generally known as "the white mutiny," for the sepōys remained loyal and disciplined. This was not the first case of trouble in the army, of which some of the officers and many of the men were foreign mercenaries, Germans, Dutch, Swiss and Frenchmen, there were two French companies serving in the war against Mir Kasim Ali, one commanded by Claude Martin, afterwards a general in the Company's service and founder of the Martinière College in Calcutta. In February 1764 after the expulsion of Mir Kasim Ali the European troops had risen in mutiny owing to the non-payment of a donation promised by Mir Jafar Ali Khan, and a number of Frenchmen deserted. The rising ended with the payment of part of the promised donation, but the sepōys continued to be persistently mutinous until in September 1764, shortly before the battle of Buxar, 30 of them were shot from the guns under Hector Munro's orders.

### **The effects of dyarchy on the people.—**

“The new rulers,” says the *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin*, “paid no attention to the concerns of the people and suffered them to be mercilessly

plundered, oppressed and tormented by officers of their own appointing' The Indian account is no exaggeration it is amply confirmed by contemporary English accounts. Abuses were rampant both in the field of commerce and administration Trade was described as one continued scene of oppression Monopolies were established in which the English or their Indian agents arbitrarily decided what quantities of goods each manufacturer should deliver and the prices he should receive for them Clive in 1772 stated that the Company's servants and their agents by trading not merely as merchants but as sovereigns had taken the bread out of the mouths of thousands of native merchants whom they reduced to beggars Verelst remarked—' Every thinking person must be sensible of one capital defect in our Government that the members of it derive their sole advantages from commerce carried on through black agents who again employ a numerous band of retainers "

The abuses of land revenue administration were even worse as they were more widely diffused Richard Barwell afterward Member of Council writing from Madras to His

father in 1767, was of opinion that the enhancement of the revenue, which appeared to be the great aim of Lord Clive, would be found in a year's time the cause of its being greatly diminished, for the country had been absolutely plundered by those appointed to make the collections—a true forecast, for in 1769 Verelst had to admit that the consequences of divided authority were the decline of commerce and cultivation, the diminution of specie and the general distresses of the poor. The methods of collecting the revenue were disastrously short-sighted. “A Phowsdar upon his acquiescing to make up the collections to such a sum as the Government may think proper to stipulate is let loose upon the country. He will make up his collections at any rate, he will demand of the unhappy farmers double rents, and on their non-compliance he will not scruple to turn out whole families destitute to wander up and down the country for subsistence.”

Richard Becher reported to the Select Committee in similar terms. “When the English received the grant of the Diwani, their first consideration seems to have been the raising of as large sums from the country as could be collected, to answer the pressing demands

from home and to defray the large expenses here. The zemindars not being willing or able to pay the sums required, Aumils, *i.e.* revenue farmers have been sent into most of the districts. These Aumils on their appointment agree with the Ministers to pay a fixed sum for the districts they are to go to and the man that has offered most has generally been preferred. The Aumils have no connection or natural interest in the country where they make the collections nor have they any certainty of holding their places beyond the year. These Aumils also have had no check on them during the time of their employment they appoint those that act under them so that during the time of the year's collections their power is absolute.

With this state of affairs Becher contrasted the condition of Burdwan where the method of letting the lands out to farmers for at least three years and English gentlemen to superintend the collections and the administration of justice has occasioned the province to flourish when the countries adjacent to it under the government of the Ministers are in a very declining state. Apart from the land revenue *ibicabs* or irregular contributions levied by the zamindars were a grievous

burden “ If he is to be married, a child born, honours conferred, luxury indulged, all must be paid by the ryot ”

**The Supervisors.**—In the hope of effecting a reform, the recommendation of the Select Committee mentioned in a previous paragraph was adopted and officers called Supervisors (or Supravisors) were appointed in 1769 to supervise the conduct of the officers of the Government in the different districts. The duties which they were instructed to discharge would have required the capacity of super-men. They were to be a reporting agency and as such to compile a history of the province, to report on the state, produce and capacity of the land, as well as the amount of the revenues and irregular cesses, to prepare an estimate of the manufactures of each district, the number employed in each industry, the annual duties levied from them and the rise and fall of demand. They were further ordered to expose and abolish illegitimate impositions on trade and to enforce the proper administration of justice. But their powers were limited in both judicial and revenue matters. In order that they might not be encumbered in their important researches, they were to have as little to do with

the collections as possible and were merely to have a negative voice until they had reported to the Resident and received from him the orders of the Ministers. They were also to have the same negative voice in judicial proceedings.

It was soon found that the system of Supervisors was a failure. 'Originally,' says Warren Hastings, they were what the word Supervisor imports: simple lookers-on without trust or authority. They became Collectors and ceased to be lookers-on: this change had taken place two years before I arrived, i.e. in 1770. Hastings admitted that those whom he knew were men of worth and ability, but as a class they were tools in the hands of their agents or banyans who were devils. The banyan is in fact the lord of every supervisorship. All the business of the district passes through the hands of the banyan to his master. No complaints or applications can come before the latter without the permission of his *maître de palais*.

It should be added that the instructions to the Supervisors were replete with anxiety to promote the welfare of the people. They were to expose and eradicate oppressions which were as grievous to the poor as they

were injurious to the Government, to display those national principles of honour, faith and rectitude which should characterize the name of an Englishman, to raise the heart of the peasant from oppression and despondency to security and joy. All admirable principles, but practice lagged far behind precept so long as the Directors, with an eye to their balance sheets, merely uttered pious sentiments and were not willing to give their employés a living wage. The rectitude which they publicly demanded in the administration was lacking while they refused to put the administrators above the level of temptation.

**Famine of 1770.**—The climax of misery was reached in 1770 when the land was desolated by famine. Famine was no new visitation—not to multiply instances, Bihar was decimated by famine in 1670-71, when over 100,000 persons died in the city and suburbs of Patna alone, and the starving people were glad to sell their children as slaves for a handful of rice—but none was so widespread and awful in its consequences. The south-east of Bengal appears to have escaped, rice to the value of over Rs 1½ lakh was imported from



Bakarganj in 1770 for distribution in the city of Murshidabad, but the rest of Bengal and Bihar suffered terribly. Warren Hastings also recorded the fact that "the famine which visited the provinces of Bengal raged with equal severity in other parts and in some much greater

The famine was due to the failure of the rains in the two preceding seasons. The distress was aggravated by scarcity of drinking water the tanks and springs drying up by the outbreak of fires in which granaries were destroyed and thousands of lives were lost by an epidemic of small pox to which the young Nawab among others fell a victim and when the drought ended by disastrous floods and the sequelæ of disease among an exhausted population. It seems only too true that the servants of the Company and their agents bought up the previous seasons rice and making a corner in it sold it at an enormous profit. Stavorinus a Dutch admiral who visited Bengal at the time states categorically that they raised the price of rice to such an extent that the people could not buy one tenth of the quantity they required and he Mr. Becher the Resident at Murshidabad and Muhammad Reza Khan accused the agents

of the English not only of monopolizing grain but of compelling the poor peasants to sell the seed wanted for the next harvest

The mortality was appalling Warren Hastings estimated in 1772 that at least one-third of the inhabitants had perished, and reports for local areas show that this can have been no exaggeration In Purnea it was estimated as early as May 1770 that one-third of the people had died—the figure of 200,000 was quoted in December—and in June the Resident reported that six-sixteenths of the people had died in those districts where the famine was worst The scenes of misery were almost too tragic for description Children were offered for sale as slaves, but no one could buy and feed them In some parts the living fed on the dead, and the banks of rivers were covered with the dying, some of whom were devoured by jackals while still alive

Efforts were made to relieve distress, *e g* , by advances to cultivators, distribution of food and the the suspension of revenue The *Siyar-ul-Mutakharin* tells us that at Patna an immense multitude were rescued from death by the charitable endeavours of Shitab Rai (the Naib Diwan) and of the British and Dutch stationed there But the numbers to

be relieved were so vast, the communication so bad and the organization of Government so defective that no measures of relief could have been adequate

**The effects of the famine** — Rain at length came at the end of July 1770 and by the middle of December the famine was at an end. The collections of revenue were now rigorously pushed on in spite of the universal distress. It seems almost incredible but is symptomatic of the spirit of the system of government that Muhammad Reza Khan collected the revenue of both 1770 and 1771 in full. It is also typical of the extraordinary conditions then prevailing that in 1772 the revenue fell because there was such a bumper crop that it was unsaleable. With defective communications and no large organized export grain trade abundant harvests at this time had the most curious results. Land went out of cultivation because of excessive production; immense stocks of rice accumulated and depressed prices to such an extent that the crops scarcely sufficed to pay the rent of the land on which they were grown.

The effects of the famine were long apparent in a reduced population and in

curtailment of cultivation, by which the whole agricultural economy of the country was upset. As late as 1789 Lord Cornwallis declared that he could "safely assert that one-third of the Company's territory in Hindustan is now a jungle inhabited only by wild beasts." In Purnea it was reported in 1788 that one-fourth of one of the largest *parganas* had been depopulated during the famine and most of the land was still uncultivated. In Birbhum a correspondent describing the march of a body of sepoys in 1780, says—"For 120 miles they marched through an extensive wood, all the way a perfect wilderness. Sometimes a small village presented itself in the midst of these jungles, with a little ground around it, hardly sufficient to encamp the two battalions. These woods abound with tigers and bears, which infested the camp every night." Ten years later the ravages of wild elephants in the same district added to the troubles of the people. In two *parganas*, for instance, 56 villages had been destroyed by them and the land had reverted to jungle, and the Collector supported a claim for reduction of revenue put in by the Raja in consequence of the depopulation caused by their ravages.

**The radical causes of misrule.**—The misrule of the years 1757 to 1772 is a sullied page in the history of the British connection with India. England says Marshman, had conquered Bengal but Bengal had subdued the morals of its conquerors. The radical causes of misrule are admirably summarized by Warren Hastings “Whatever may have been the conduct of individuals, or even of the collective members of your former administrations the blame is not so much attributable to them as to the want of a principle of government adequate to its substance and a coercive power to enforce it. The extent of Bengal and its possible resources are equal to those of most States in Europe. Its difficulties are greater than those of any because it wants both an established form and power of government.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Warren Hastings' Administration.

**The state of the Company's finances.**—It is a remarkable thing that within a few years after each of the two victories, Plassey and Buxar, which placed power in its hands, the Company tottered on the brink of bankruptcy. No more striking proof could be given of the rottenness of the dyarchic system than its effects on the finances of the Company. It was unable to pay its way while its servants amassed fortunes. In 1767 the Directors, in alarm at their financial difficulties, despatched three plenipotentiaries, Vansittart, Colonel Forde and Scrafton, under the designation of Supervisors, to put the Company's affairs on a better footing. After a thorough investigation, they were to take such measures as were necessary for the purpose, and were even authorized to suspend the Presidents and Councils. They never reached India, however, their ship being lost at sea with all hands. Misgovernment went on unchecked and it was essential to discontinue the vicious system under which the

Company was a kind of sleeping partner, receiving revenue without assuming responsibility, while the administration was left in the hands of an Indian agency under no proper control. It was decided to take over direct management of the Diwani and set out on a new course of retrenchment and reform.

**Appointment of Warren Hastings as Governor, 1772.**—The man selected to carry out this policy was Warren Hastings now 30 years of age with 20 years of service who assumed office as Governor of Bengal and President of the Council in April 1772. He found he said the treasury empty, the revenue declining, the expense unchecked and the whole country yet languishing under the recent effects of a mortal famine. The land required years of quiet to restore its population and culture. He had to remodel the whole administration to evolve orderly government out of chaos, this Herculean task he fulfilled during the thirteen years of his administration first as Governor (1772-74) and then as Governor General under the Regulating Act of 1773. Within a year he could claim that the authority of the Company had been established and the seat of

government effectually and visibly transferred from Murshidabad to Calcutta

**The policy of Warren Hastings.**—In view of the many misconceptions of Warren Hastings' aims, it will be well to give his own statement (1776) of the cardinal points of his policy, *viz* —

“(1) To implant the authority of the Company and the sovereignty of Great Britain in the constitution of this country

(2) “ To abolish all secret influence and make the government itself responsible for all measures by making them all pass by its avowed authority

(3) “ To remove all impediments which prevented the complaints of the people from reaching the ears of the supreme administration or established an independent despotism in its agents

(4) “ To relieve the ryots from oppressive taxes

(5) “ To relieve the distresses of the Company at home and pay off their heavy debts here by a uniform and regular mode of collecting their rents, by savings in expenses and by foreign acquisitions of wealth



(6) " To extend the political influence of the Company without enlarging their territory or dividing their military strength

**Assumption of direct government** —The Court of Directors formally announced their "determination to stand forth as Duan and by the agency of the Company's servants to take upon ourselves the entire care and management of the revenues. A clean sweep was made of the existing agency. Muhammad Reza Khan who for seven years had exercised the whole executive and administrative power in Bengal was relieved of his office as was also Shitab Rai the Naib Diwan of Bihar. Stringent orders were also passed that every person employed by or in conjunction with Muhammad Reza Khan or acting under his influence should be divested of any charge or direction in the business of revenue collections. Both he and Shitab Rai being suspected of huge embezzlements were put on trial but acquitted after long inquiry.

**Revenue administration** — Having got rid of the only expert staff available Hastings and the Council had to improvise a new

agency Ignorant of the intricacies of a complicated system, their early efforts were necessarily tentative and experimental. Even a revenue expert like Sir John Shore admitted some years later "In whom the rightful ownership of all those broad beegahs was vested, we knew no more than we did of the landed property of the moon" Hastings would gladly have abolished the Collectors, as the Supervisors were now called, whom he "had always considered as tyrants," but this was not feasible As a temporary expedient they were retained, Indian officers called *Diwans* being associated with them and checks imposed to prevent any abuse of their powers In 1774 they were replaced by Indian officers called *Amils* or agents At the same time a system of superior control was introduced The Revenue Councils at Murshidabad and Patna, which had been constituted in 1770 and which were practically independent, were done away with, and the revenue administration was brought under the direct control of the President and Council at Calcutta The districts were next grouped in six divisions under Provincial Councils with headquarters at Calcutta, Murshidabad, Dacca, Burdwan, Dinajpur

and Patna in subordination to a Central Committee of Revenue at Calcutta these bodies continued to exercise control until 1781

As regards the amount of revenue to be paid the device was adopted of putting up the estates to auction on 5 years' leases with most unfortunate results. The old zamindars in most cases were outbid by speculators who offered sums which they proved unable to pay. The competitive system thus introduced was accordingly a complete failure. An attempt was made to protect cultivators by stipulating in the leases of the revenue farmers the sums which they might be called on to pay and by requiring the farmers to give them *pattar* i.e., declaratory leases specifying the conditions on which they held their lands and the rents for which they were liable but it is doubtful whether these afforded any real protection.

**Judicial reforms.**—Another urgent trial was that of reforming the judicial administration. The regular course of justice according to Hastings was everywhere suspended but every man exercised it who had the power of compelling others to submit to his

decisions. The place of regular courts was, in fact, supplied by the unauthorized tribunals of the zamindars.

As a remedy for this state of affairs civil and criminal courts were constituted for the districts with two superior appellate courts in Calcutta. There were at this time only fourteen districts. The local civil courts consisted of Indian officers presided over by the Collectors as representing the Diwan. The criminal courts were composed of Muhammadan judicial officers administering the Muhammadan criminal law the Collector merely had authority to see that witnesses were duly examined and that the decisions were fair and impartial. The principle of judicial administration which Hastings desired to follow was "to found the authority of the British government in Bengal on its ancient laws," and with this object he set about a codification of Hindu and Muhammadan law, which was "to point the way to rule this people with ease and moderation according to their own ideas, manners and prejudices." For this purpose he brought down to Calcutta ten of the most learned Pandits in the country to compile a digest of Hindu law. As no European at the time knew Sanskrit, the

digest had to be translated into Persian and was again translated into English by Hallhed, one of the Company's officers

**Retrenchments** —The retrenchments which Hastings effected within a year of his assumption of office consisted of the stoppage of the tribute to the Emperor the cessation of the salaries paid to Muhammad Reza Khan and the reduction of the stipend paid to the Nawab which resulted in a saving of Rs 57 lakhs a year The Emperor was now a tool in the hands of the Marathas and the continuance of the tribute would merely have swelled their coffers The salaries of the Naib Diwans naturally ceased on the abolition of their offices—Muhammad Reza Khan's salary alone was Rs 9 lakhs a year—and the childhood of the new Nawab justified cutting down the stipend It was now fixed at Rs 16 lakhs a year and stood at that figure till 1762

Hastings was however to find that whatever savings he might effect were swallowed up by the wars in which the Company embarked As Holwell had pathily remarked years before— A trading and a fighting Company is a two-headed monster The expense and inexperience of the latter

must exceed confound and destroy every profit or advantage gained by the former "

**Trade regulations.**—Hastings himself held liberal views on the question of trade. He realized that the interests of the Company as rulers could not be reconciled with their trade monopoly. "We have not," he wrote in 1785, "been able so far to change our ideas with our situation as to quit the contracted view of monopolists for objects tending to promote the prosperity of those territories from which we derive so valuable a tribute. . . . It is of less consequence, considered as a national concern, that the investment\* should be procured cheap than that the commerce of the country should flourish, and I insist upon it as a fixed and incontrovertible principle that commerce can only flourish when it is equal and free." These views were far in advance of those held by the Directors.

Hastings was unable to put a stop to the right of private inland trade enjoyed by the Company's officers. He did, however, prevent their having a preferential position by

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\* The "investment" meant the purchase of merchandise for export for England. It was the means of remitting the annual surplus to that country, and on it depended the dividends of the Company.

exemption from customs duties. He abolished the system of free passes called *dastaks*, he imposed a single duty of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent which they had to pay like the Indian traders, and he brought the manufacture of salt and opium under Government control. He also succeeded in stopping the exploitation of the cloth weavers by the Company's servants and their Indian agents. Their *modus operandi* was to make advances to the weavers and then purchase their cloths at an arbitrary valuation which was often no more than the cost of the materials. The weavers were consequently in a chronic state of debt and little better than slaves. For this outrageous system he substituted ready money purchases and withdrawing the Indian agents he announced that the weavers were free to work for whomsoever they liked.

**Enforcement of law and order**—The enforcement of law and order was a task of pressing and primary importance. The country was full of disorderly elements—dacoits or robbers with whom plundering was an hereditary occupation, religious devotees called *sannyasis* or *jakirs* who made religion a cloak for robbery and lived on the

country, disbanded soldiers and ruined peasants. The number of mercenaries deprived of their former livelihood on the downfall of the Mughal government was large. It was estimated at the time that there were two million men of this class in India. Apart from the Nawab's army, local potentates, as we have seen, had large forces at their command. The Nawab of Purnea and Raja of Birbhum could put armies of 16,000 and 25,000 men in the field, and the larger zamindars kept up bodies of armed retainers. A small portion of these were absorbed in the militia called the *sibandi* crops, but the majority were forced to take to other means of getting a livelihood, and a life of plunder was habitual and congenial.

In the years following the famine of 1770 the number of those who preyed on the country was swollen by crowds of destitute peasants left without the means of cultivation. In 1771 it was reported from Rajshahi that villages were being fired by people whose distress drove them to desperate acts. "Numbers of ryots, who have hitherto borne the first of characters among their neighbours, pursue this last resource to procure themselves a subsistence." And it is on record—



incredible as the numbers appear—that in the cold weather of 1772 bodies of fifty thousand men descended on the rice fields of Bengal

The duties of police had devolved on the zamindars who kept up wretchedly inefficient establishments for the purpose and were frequently in league with bands of robbers. These were now swollen to such a size that the zamindars were unable to cope with them even if they had the will to do so. Indian officers called *Faujdars* were accordingly appointed to each of the fourteen districts with an armed force for the protection of the inhabitants and though they too were eventually found to be a broken reed a beginning was made in the restoration of law and order.

**Dacoits** —The professional robbers called dacoits had long been a pest to the country. They were described by Warren Hastings as ‘a race of outlaws who live from father to son in a state of warfare against society plundering and burning villages and murdering the villagers.’ The Committee of Council in 1772 said that they were ‘no like robbers in England individuals driven to such courses

by sudden want, they are robbers by profession and even by birth, they are formed into regular communities, and their families subsist by the spoils which they bring home to them ”

Reinforced by disbanded soldiers and homeless peasants forced by want into a life of crime, they became formidable hordes In the huge frontier district of Rangpur, part of which was little more than an Alsatia for robbers, they were in 1772 devastating the country “ in bodies of 50,000 ”—probably an overestimate, but the figures are eloquent of large numbers A small force sent against them was unequal to the task, and in 1773 four battalions had to be employed after Captain Thomas, the leader of one detachment, had been cut off Drastic penalties were prescribed for dacoity in 1772, every dacoit being condemned to death and his family to slavery, but the evil lingered for many years. Hastings himself deplored such severe and harsh punishments, but felt that nothing less would “ prevail against an evil which has the sanction and force of hereditary occupation under the almost avowed protection, both of the zamindars of the country and the first

officers of the Government ' The zamindars he declared, were ' often, and those of Dacca always the patrons and abettors of dacoits

**Raids of Sannyasis** —The *Sannyasis* were a peculiar visitation of these disturbed times. The *locus classicus* on the subject is Warren Hastings account ' The history of this people is curious. They inhabit or rather possess the country lying south of the hills of Tibet from Cabul to China. They go mostly naked. They have neither towns houses nor families but rove continually from place to place recruiting their numbers with the healthiest children they can steal in the countries through which they pass. Thus they are the stoutest and most active men in India. Many are merchants. They are all pilgrims and held by all castes of Gentooes i.e. Hindus in great veneration. This infatuation prevents our obtaining any intelligence of their motions or aid from the country against them inasmuch that they often appear in the heart of the province as if they dropped from heaven. They are hardly bold and enthusiastic to a degree surpassing credulity. Such are the Sannyases the gipsies of Hindustan '

They are known to have appeared in Eastern Bengal in 1763, when a large body infested the country round Bakarganj while the English factory at Dacca fell into their hands after it had been abandoned in fear of their attack. A corps of them was also employed by Shuja-ud-daula in his campaign of 1764. These men, who numbered 5,000, all naked and covered with paint and ashes, made a furious attack on the British lines at Patna, but were mown down by a volley of grape and musketry.

The *Sannyasis* mostly infested North Bengal but were frequently met with on the pilgrim route to Puri, travelling in bands several thousands strong and looting the villages which they passed through. Besides these roaming bodies, numbers of them settled down in hermitages, which they fortified, and combined the profitable trade of money-lending with dacoity. They appear to have been driven out of the province by 1774, but scattered bands made their appearance in North Bengal some years later. In 1776 Major Rennell, the great surveyor and ~~sa~~ographer, was seriously wounded in a pitched battle with 800 *Sannyasis*. In 1782, a body of 700, accompanied by horses,

union of civil and political power with its commercial affairs, and had to apply to the Government for a loan. Lord North's Government gave the Company a loan of £1 400,000 and also endeavoured to help it in disposing of its enormous stocks of unsold tea. There were at the time seventeen million pounds of tea from China lying in its warehouses and it was enacted that all tea sold in the American colonies should pay a small tax and have a rebate of the heavy English duties. This led to the famous 'Boston tea party' of 1773 when a party of colonists disguised as Red Indians boarded the ships on arrival and dumped the cargoes of tea into the harbour as a protest against the unpopular tax imposed without their consent.

At the same time the authority of Parliament over the affairs of the Company was established by the Regulating Act of which the main provisions were as follows —

(1) The government of the Presidency of Bengal was vested in a Governor General and four Members of Council. The first appointments were made by Parliament for a term of five years—a period which has since become usual for Governors. Lieutenant Governors

and Members of Council After this, the power of patronage was to rest with the Company

(2) The Governor-General and Council were given superior authority over the other two Presidencies of Bombay and Madras in regard to making war and concluding treaties—a salutary provision necessary for the co-ordination of foreign policy

(3) A supreme Court of Judicature, composed of a Chief Justice and three other Judges, was set up at Calcutta for the administration of English law to British subjects It was also empowered to hear cases against any one employed by, or, directly or indirectly, in the service of the Company

(4) It prohibited Collectors and all persons engaged in the administration of justice from buying and selling goods either themselves or by means of agents

(5) Copies of despatches from India were to be submitted to the British Government for information

The inherent defects of the Act were, firstly, that the Governor-General was liable to be over-ridden by his Council He was merely *primus inter pares*, having one vote

like the other members, with a casting vote when they were equally divided. Anything more unsuitable for a country where, as Clive had pointed out, the people have no idea of a divided power and imagine all authority to be vested in a single man, cannot be conceived.

Secondly, the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court in relation to both the Government and the people outside Calcutta was not clearly defined while the courts already established were completely ignored. So far from regulating the government, the Act offended against the first principles of administrative mechanics, there being no unity of government while the executive was at the mercy of a judicature which had no responsibility for the welfare of the country.

**Dissensions in the Council**—The first Members of Council were General Clavering, the Honourable George Monson, Philip Francis and Richard Barwell. Of these Barwell (who had been a Member of the former Council) alone had administrative experience in India and alone supported Hastings. The others were obsessed by the idea that all that had been done by Hastings

before their arrival must be wrong and that they were to act as a court of inquisition into his past administration. Francis, a man of a curiously malignant and perverse nature, combined with great ability, supplied the brains and leadership. Hastings found himself in a permanent minority and a government by faction was set up.

**Reversal of Hastings' policy.**—Within a short time Francis and his colleagues had changed the basis of government, besides reversing Hastings' foreign policy. With the latter this provincial history is not concerned, except in so far that under their dictation Benares and Ghazipur were detached from Oudh and added to Bengal in 1775. Muhammad Reza Khan was reinstated as Naib Nazim, all the powers of the magistracy and courts of criminal justice centred in him without check or control, and the superior court of the Nizamat Adalat was transferred back to Murshidabad. Hastings bitterly and vainly complained that the Nawab's sovereignty had been publicly proclaimed and that of the Company disclaimed, while the new courts of justice had been either abolished or rendered of no effect.



**Revenue administration.**—The revenue administration went from bad to worse. Hastings had realized that the amounts for which estates had been let out in 1772 were excessive and allowed remissions. The triumvirate now in power declared that the demand was excessive and the cultivators were oppressed but refused to consent to a single remission which might benefit them. A hot dispute arose as to the basis of the new assessment which is of interest in view of the permanent settlement subsequently effected by Lord Cornwallis.

Hastings with Barwell put forward proposals that all new taxes imposed on the ryots since the Company's assumption of the Diwani should be abolished that the 24 Parganas should be sold in lots as zamindaries and that a settlement of the whole province should be made on the following lines. The land was to be farmed out on leases for life or for two joint lives to such responsible people as offered the most advantageous terms but preference was to be given to the zamindars when their offers were equal or nearly equal. No increase was to be levied or deduction allowed on any account and the zamindari was to be sold on failure to pay the

revenue An important rider was added that possession should, on the death of a zamindar, devolve to his heirs with the option to Government to demand either the same revenue as before or the average of the collections of the three preceding years, provided that this was not less than the revenue already paid or 10 per cent in excess of it This system was to be incorporated by law, so that it should not be in the power of the Governor and Council to change or deviate from it on any occasion or for any pretence whatever The provision about settlement with heirs would have practically resulted in a permanent settlement with the zamindars mere farmers of the revenue other than zamindars were to be on a different footing, having only a life interest

Francis put forward another scheme, which would also have brought about a permanent settlement He is believed to have had the assistance of Sir John Shore, the great revenue expert of the day, in drawing up his minute, but his substantive proposals were entirely opposed to Shore's principles He took the view that the zamindar was a proprietor in the European sense, that the demand of revenue should be based on an estimate of the amount required for the civil and military

government, as well as for the Company's investment and that this sum should be raised by an assessment of the different estates, each of which should pay its proportion as ascertained by the receipts of the three preceding years. The amount so fixed was to be declared the quit-rent in perpetuity. An addendum was that the zamindars should have civil and criminal jurisdiction as 'they are not merely the stewards or collectors of the public revenue but are or ought to be the instruments of government in almost every branch of the civil administration. Hastings himself had the lowest opinion of the zamindars asserting roundly that it was notorious that both in Bengal and Bihar much the greatest part are incapable of judging or acting for themselves, being either minors or men of weak understanding or absolute idiots.

Next year Hastings laid down the sound principle that whatever might be the plan adopted a detailed inquiry must be made to ascertain the value of the lands and the rates of rents his declared aim being to secure for the ryots the perpetual and undisturbed possession of their lands and to secure them against arbitrary exactions. In the end the Directors decided on yearly settlements.

which were to be made without putting up estates to auction, on the basis of the reports of a special committee which inquired into the resources of each estate. This expedient intensified the mischief, for the new lessees, having no assurance that they would hold the estates for more than a year, extorted as much as they could.

**The trial of Nand Kumar, 1775.**—Francis, Clavering and Monson had, as already stated, set themselves up as a court of inquisition into Hastings' past conduct of affairs, and it was notorious that charges against him would be welcomed by the inquisitors. In March 1775 a grave accusation of fraud and corruption was brought before them by Maharaja Nand Kumar, a man long prominent in public life, who had been Naib Diwan under Mir Jafar Ali Khan and had assisted in the inquiry into the administration of Muhammad Reza Khan to whose post he had hoped to succeed. He insinuated that Hastings had corruptly acquitted Muhammad Reza Khan and Shitab Rai, definitely charged him with taking a bribe of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  lakhs of rupees in 1772 for the appointment of Mani Begam as guardian of the young Nawab and of his own son, Gurdas,

as Diwan or controller of the household Hastings refused to acknowledge the right of the Council of which he was President to arraign him like a criminal. He was summarily condemned in his absence and the papers forwarded to the Court of Directors who showed their contempt for the proceedings by merely filing them. Hastings with Barwell retaliated by bringing a charge of conspiracy against Nand Kumar before the Supreme Court. Nand Kumar was acquitted of the charge relating to Hastings but convicted of conspiracy against Barwell. Sentence was not however passed because he was at the time under sentence of death for forgery.

The case which ended in this sentence was instituted by one Mohan Parshad an attorney of Calcutta as a sequel to civil litigation. The result was so extraordinarily opportune for Hastings that coincided with a theory of causal connexion and he was subsequently accused both of instigating the prosecution and of influencing the Chief Justice to commit a judicial murder. It has however been established after exhaustive sifting of the papers of the case that there is not a shadow of proof that

Hastings was in any way connected with the prosecution or that the trial was conducted in any but a perfectly fair way. It took place before a jury which was empanelled after Nand Kumar had exercised his right of challenge in 18 cases. It lasted eight days and was conducted by a full Bench of the Supreme Court, *z e*, Chief Justice Impey and Justices Chambers, Hyde and LeMaistre. The jury returned a unanimous verdict and the sentence was in accordance with the draconic code of the English law, as it stood then and for many years afterwards. It was the maximum penalty, but this was not the first time that the Supreme Court inflicted the capital sentence on an Indian for forgery.

**The improved position of Hastings.**—The execution of Nand Kumar removed a useful instrument from the hands of the three inquisitors, who found no one to take his place, for the Indian public, applying the *post hoc propter hoc* line of argument, attributed his fate to the machinations of Hastings and none dared to try another impeachment. The position of Hastings was further strengthened by the death of Monson in September 1776, when the two parties in the Council became of equal

strength and Hastings could secure a majority by means of his casting vote pending the arrival of a successor to Monson

Before this Hastings chafing at his equivocal position had contemplated resigning his office and in October 1776 his agent in England Colonel Maclean informed the Court of Directors of his desire to retire. Actually Hastings had only declared that he would not continue in the Government of Bengal unless certain conditions were granted but the Directors who were dissatisfied with some of his measures jumped at the opportunity of getting rid of him. Holding that the conditions of Hastings were not likely to be granted they treated his statement as a tender of resignation which they accepted.

agent, who, he afterwards declared, had exceeded his instructions. He would not, however, tolerate the premature attempt of Clavering to oust him. He refused to abdicate, issued counter orders to the troops, and referred the dispute to the Supreme Court, whose opinion Clavering agreed to accept. The Court held that there had been no resignation and that Clavering had no right to assume the office of Governor-General. Hastings in his turn tried to get Clavering off the Council on the plea that by taking the oath as Governor-General he had vacated his seat as Member and his office of Commander-in-Chief, but the Supreme Court, to which this question was also referred, found against Hastings on the ground that the Council had no power to remove one of its members or declare his seat vacant.

A few months later Clavering died of dysentery, and though Wheler, who arrived at the end of 1777 to fill the vacancy caused by Monson's death, sided with Francis, Hastings could still be master in the Council owing to his casting vote. He used the opportunity in 1778 to dismiss Muhammad Reza Khan from the office of Naib Nazim. The struggle



against the obstructiveness of Francis continued till 1780 when Hastings deliberately charged him with being void of truth and honour in his private as well as his public life. The reflection on his private honour so offended Francis that he challenged Hastings to a duel which ended in Francis being wounded. A few months later Francis left for England where he conducted an equally vindictive but more effective campaign against Hastings. His antagonist Hastings triumphantly wrote in Ciceronian style had sickened, died and fled and with no one to dispute his predominance in the Council he was free to resume his administrative reforms.

**Disputes with the Supreme Court—** Though dissension ceased in the Council differences with the Supreme Court now brought about a constitutional crisis. The loose wording of the Regulating Act left a loophole for disputes as to the powers of the Court. Its jurisdiction extended not only to British subjects but also to cases brought against persons directly or indirectly in the service of the Company. The limits of jurisdiction were uncertain as regards both the executive government and persons like

zamindars, associated with the revenue administration, while its relations to the courts in the districts were not defined

Disputes were avoided for some time by the tact of Impey and the Judges, who, according to a statement made by Hastings in 1776, made it their aim to support the authority of Government and to temper the law of England with the laws, religious customs and manners of the people. This happy state of affairs ended in 1780, largely owing to the attempts of Hyde and LeMaistre to assert the independence of the Court and to establish its jurisdiction over zamindars, as well as the collectors of revenue and officers of the provincial courts for acts done in the execution of their duty. The scandal was witnessed of a posse of the Court's officers and men, to the number of 86, who attached the property of a Raja, being made prisoners by the Company's officers, of the Governor-General and Council being summoned before the Supreme Court, refusing to plead and being declared to have committed contempt of court. The Indians, fearful of the unknown terrors of a strange system of law, were in a state of alarm. Petitions were actually sent to Parliament on behalf of the

Government and people stating that unless the Court was checked by legislation "the Company would have ports without trade possessions without revenue and provinces without inhabitants", and a Parliamentary Committee, on which Burke sat, recorded its opinion that the Court had been generally terrible to the natives and had distracted the government of the country without substantially reforming one of its abuses.

A solution of the difficulty was found by Hastings. Courts of civil justice were established for the six provincial divisions distinct from and independent of the revenue councils. All the civil courts were subordinate to the Sadr Diwani Adalat which was to be not merely a court of appeal, but to revise their proceedings and exercise control over them. It was arranged that the Chief Justice Impey should be the head of the Sadr Diwani Adalat so as to prevent friction and at the same time secure conformity and regularity in the proceedings of the Company's Courts. The Judges being under the protection of the Chief Justice would not be deterred from discharging their duties by the fear or threat of prosecution before the Supreme Court being under his control their

work was likely to improve in quality. These anticipations were fulfilled. Impey did his best to make a success of the new system and himself compiled a useful code by which the proceedings of the Company's Courts were regulated.

The arrangement was condemned as a corrupt bargain and Impey stigmatized by Macaulay as becoming rich, quiet and infamous. The imputation is unfair. Soon after Impey assumed the new office he wrote to Lord Thurlow, then Attorney-General and afterwards Lord Chancellor, offering to refund the salary of the post if its retention was considered improper by him or any of the Ministers, and he refused to draw pay till he had a reply. Parliament, however, held that the two offices, one under the Crown and the other under the Company, were incompatible, that the independence of the Supreme Court was compromised by the Chief Justice holding a salaried office under the Company. The post was accordingly abolished and Impey recalled (1782), and it was not till 1861 that the sound principle of making the local courts subordinate to a High Court of Judicature was reaffirmed.

**The Declaratory Act of 1781** —As a result of the petitions presented to Parliament, the conflict as to the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court was settled by a new statute laying down that it did not extend either to the Governor General and Council for acts done in their public capacity or to any one merely by reason of his being a land holder or farmer of revenue except in actions or suits which the parties agreed should be tried by the Court

**Administrative changes** —The number of civil courts in the districts was increased and the Judges given some police duties under the title of Magistrates in place of the *Fauj-dars* whose notorious oppressions necessitated their removal. The British judges were only entrusted with the executive work of arresting offenders and preventing breaches of the peace. The trial of criminal cases still rested with the *Darogas* Indian officers administering Indian law and responsible to the Nawab

The provincial Councils of Revenue instituted in 1774 were now (1781) abolished and the revenue administration made over to a committee of four who were paid by a commission of one per cent. of the net collections

The presidents of the provincial councils were made Collectors, but had little to do with the settlements of revenue, for Collectors were mistrusted. The policy was one of centralization free from corruption, but without an adequate local agency. The customs were also put in the hands of commissioners paid by a commission on their collections. unauthorized exactions were put a stop to and steps taken to ensure the levy of fixed and equal duties from all traders.

**Other activities.**—Hastings had a real admiration for the literature and culture of India, the effect of which may be gathered from the statement in Price's *Observations and Remarks* that in all the Company's settlements there reigned a rage to become proficient in Persian and the Indian languages. "The young gentlemen at Bengal know how great a proficient Mr Hastings is in all the learnings of Asia and they are afraid to appear before him to talk on a subject of which they know nothing or little." A practical outcome of the growing interest in Indian learning and lore was the foundation in 1784 of the Asiatic Society of Bengal by Sir William Jones, a Judge of the Supreme

Court, and a learned orientalist, who himself translated several Indian classics. Hastings proposed the foundation of a Professorship of Persian at the University of Oxford, a proposal which was not carried out.

The Muhammadans were indebted to him for the foundation (1781) of a Madrasa or college of Oriental learning in Calcutta. Similar institutions were at one time common, but had fallen into decay and ruin and this was almost the only complete establishment of its kind in India. The gratitude of the Muhammadans was evinced in a memorial sent to Parliament during his impeachment in which it was stated that thousands of students reaping the benefits of the Madrasa offered up prayers for the prosperity of England and the success of the Company.

Steps were taken to pacify the predatory tribes of Paharias in the Rajmahal Hill—a task completed by Augustus Cleveland who as his epitaph (1784) relates—without bloodshed or the terror of authority employing only the means of conciliation confidence and benevolence attempted and accomplished the entire subjection of the lawless and savage inhabitants of the Jungleterry or Junglee Tarai of Rajmahal who had long infested

the neighbouring lands by their predatory incursions, inspired them with a taste for the arts of civilised life and attached them to the British Government by a conquest over their minds—the most permanent as the most rational mode of dominion ”

Hastings also entered into friendly relations with Bhutan and Tibet. The Bhutanese had overrun the State of Cooch Behar in 1772 and captured its Raja. An appeal having been made to Hastings, the Bhutanese were expelled after some hard fighting. The casualties in the attack on the fort of Cooch Behar amounted to one-fourth of the British force. Peace was concluded through the intervention of the Tashi Lama of Tibet, and next year (1774) Hastings took the opportunity to despatch an envoy, Mr Bogle, to Bhutan and Tibet. Bogle succeeded in obtaining permission for free trade between Bengal and Bhutan. A second mission was sent under Turner to a new Tashi Lama in 1783, as a result of which any Indian traders recommended by the Governor-General were allowed to trade with Tibet. These missions yielded some interesting by-products. Bogle's visit to Bhutan started the cultivation of potatoes in that country, for Hastings, with a



care even for small things, instructed him to plant potatoes in the places which he visited. It also led to the establishment of a Buddhist monastery in Howrah, which still survives under the name of Bhot Bagan i.e., the Tibetan garden for the Tashi Lama requested that he might be given a place on the bank of the Ganges at which his people might pray. An Indian named Puran Gir Gosain, who had been the Tashi Lama's envoy in 1773 was made the Mahant or prior this man accompanied the Turner mission and was appointed Hastings' accredited agent to the Tashi Lama in 1785.

**Foreign policy** — Both Hastings and the Directors were opposed to territorial aggrandisement. Except for the small islands of Salsette and Elephanta in the neighbourhood of Bombay the only acquisitions during his administration consisted of the districts of Benares and Ghazipur which were taken over from Oudh in 1770 at the dictation of the majority in Council. The only wars which owed their inspiration to Hastings himself were the small Bhutane war already mentioned which was necessary for the security of the northern frontier and the Rohilla war of

1773, which was undertaken to prevent Rohilkhand falling into the hands of the Marathas, now the only enemy the British power had to face, and by adding it to Oudh to form a compact buffer state. He was, however, drawn, by the impolitic measures of the Governments of Bombay and Madras, into distant and protracted wars, which affected Bengal and Bihar only in so far that their revenues had to be drawn on for meeting the expenses of the campaigns. Chronic financial stringency was caused by these long wars and the necessity of providing the "investment," already mentioned, *i e*, the purchase and export of merchandise to England.

It should also be mentioned that both Chandernagore and Chinsura were occupied without opposition, when the French (1778) and the Dutch (1781) joined the Americans in war with Great Britain. The surrender of Chinsura was almost farcical. The Dutch Governor was a personal friend of Hastings, and to save his *amour propre* it was arranged that he should surrender it to a large force. By some mistake only a subaltern and 14 men were sent, and the Dutch Governor refused to give up the town to anything less than a regiment, which had accordingly to be sent. Both

places were restored after peace was concluded in 1783. During the war the Danish settlement of Friedrichsnagar, as Serampon was called, flourished owing to the exclusion of both the French and Dutch from trade and also because neutral ships had the advantage in sea borne traffic so long as British ships were subject to the risk of capture and high rates of insurance. So much was this the case that, so long as the war lasted the overseas trade was in the hands of the Danes.

**Internal state of the country**—The revenues of Bengal and Bihar were at this time looked upon as an inexhaustible fund from which the deficits of the other presidencies could be supplied. The annual drain on this account increased annually till in 1764 it amounted to one crore of rupees. The existence of such a surplus after defraying the cost of government and of the military establishment, was due to the introduction of stable government with retrenchment and reforms as well as to the fact that the country was beginning to recover from the effects of the great famine and cultivation was spreading. Economic recovery was the result of political security.

7. It must not be imagined, however, that the peace of the country was complete or that its prosperity was comparable to that now prevailing. Dacoits still infested parts of the country and had to be kept in check by military force. In 1780 they started a fire which burned down 15,000 houses and caused 200 deaths in Calcutta. In 1783 a band, 3,000 strong, attacked an escort conveying treasure in Jessore and carried off the treasure, another leader of dacoits in the same district held out with 1,500 men and defeated the sepoy sent to arrest him. In Bogra there was a pitched battle in 1777 between local dacoits and a body of 200 religious fanatics from up-country, mounted on horses and armed with swords, which ended in the extermination of the robber band. Another band, in 1784 carried off 600 women. In Eastern Bengal the destruction of crops by heavy floods in 1784 produced a famine, in which thousands died of starvation while a brisk trade was driven in the children whom their starving parents sold as slaves. It is significant of the change since made in economic conditions that this famine occurred when rice sold for 25 seers (50 lbs) for the rupee, while in Purnea a fall in the

price of coarse rice from 4 maunds (320 lbs) per rupee to 1 maund 10 seers (100 lbs.) raised panic fears of a repetition of the famine of 1770

**Disturbed condition of Bihar**—Parts of Bihar were still in an unsettled state owing partly to the legacy of unrest left by the Mughal Government and partly to the disastrous revenue policy. In Tirhut many zamindars set authority at defiance and led the life of free-booters. Those to the north on the border of Nepal wrote the Judge in 1781, were all to a man villains and tyrants and many of them have long been in a state of petty warfare with Government. In Saran the Maharaja of Husepur (of the Hathwa Raj family) refused to pay revenue and when ejected with the help of troops retired to a forest fastness just across the border in the dominions of the Nawab of Oudh from which he made frequent raids and laid the country under contribution. He had under him a trained force of horsemen and matchlockmen the number of his followers was swollen by crowds of *sannyasis* and banditti and all punitive expeditions proved infructuous. He eventually exchanged the life of an out-law for that of a religious ascetic.

The whole of South Bihar was settled in 1781 with Raja Kalyan Singh, who proceeded to sublet it partly to the old families of zamindars and partly to revenue farmers with no local influence or prestige. The revenue officers had to send sepoys to assist them in collecting rents, for, as the Collector of Shahabad recorded, "It is not here as in Bengal, where a peon acting by order can bring a whole *pargana* of ryots before the Collector without the least trouble. In this part of the country it is very different, for they do not scruple to oppose even an armed force sent by order of Government."

**Chait Singh's rebellion, 1781.**—Kalyan Singh exercised his powers in a tyrannical and arbitrary manner, zamindars being imprisoned and dispossessed of their estates for arrears of revenue. Under these conditions it is not surprising that when the rebellion of Raja Chait Singh of Benares broke out, some of them took sides against the Government to which they ascribed their troubles. One large zamindar of Gaya escaped from imprisonment at Patna and raising a force of 4,000 to 5,000 men proceeded to plunder the country till a strong force was sent against

him Another zamindar of Gava took advantage of the confusion to raise the banner of revolt with a body of 1500 men and held out till 1782 when he was sent as a State prisoner to Dacca There was also a rising in Tirhut, the Collector of which writing in 1785 said that when he took over charge three years previously "the country had been in revolt owing to the intrigues of the Raja of Benares Chait Singh whose baneful influence had spread so far and would have spread further had he not been checked in time by Mr Hastings wise and spirited measures"

**The development of Calcutta**—Calcutta had long since recovered from the damage done in 1756 when it was taken by Siraj ud daula With part of the money received as reparations the village of Gobindpur was cleared and the present fort was built and completed in 1773 along Chowringhee the large houses were built which have given to Calcutta the somewhat misleading name of a 'city of palaces' Taking the town as a whole it was very different from and much more insular than modern Calcutta Its general appearance at this time was

gathered from the description given by William Mackintosh in *Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa* (1782) He referred to it as "that scattered and confused chaos of houses, huts, sheds, streets, lanes, alleys, windings, gullies, sinks and tanks, which, jumbled into an undistinguished mass of filth and corruption, equally offensive to human sense and health, compose the capital of the English Company's Government in India The very small portion of cleanliness which it enjoys is owing to the familiar intercourse of hungry jackals by night and ravenous vultures, kites and crows by day "

**Parliamentary intervention.**—After 1780 Parliament, which had begun to realize that a new overseas dominion was springing up in India, took an increasingly active interest in its affairs In 1781 it passed the Declaratory Act defining the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and another Act renewing the charter of the Company, in which the opportunity was taken to provide that all despatches to India should be submitted to the Government, as well as those from India In the same year two parliamentary committees were appointed, one to



inquire into the causes of the Carnatic war the other, in which Burke was the leading spirit to inquire into the administration of justice in Bengal. As a result of the recommendations of the latter which submitted as many as twelve reports an address was moved in 1782 for the recall of Impey.

The House of Commons also turned on Hastings recording a resolution that it was the duty of the Directors to remove him from his office on the ground that he had acted in a manner repugnant to the honour and welfare of the nation and had brought calamities on India and enormous expenses on the company. The Directors who were hostile to his policy resolved on his recall but had to rescind their resolution by order of the Court of Proprietors with whom alone rested the power of removal. They did not share what Hastings called that fashionable prejudice which ascribes every act of the Government of Bengal to improper motives and brands the authors with criminality. On the contrary they warmly supported him and refused to act on a mere resolution of the House of Commons. It must moreover be remembered that though Lord North disapproved of some of Hastings' measures particularly as regards the Robbills

war, he had from 1779 to 1781 proposed his annual reappointment, because it was a time of war, difficulty, danger and distress requiring the firmness and ability of Hastings

In 1783-84 no less than four East India Bills were brought forward, of which one passed into law. The first was introduced by Dundas but dropped in consequence of the overthrow of the Shelburne ministry by a coalition of Whigs under Charles James Fox and of Tories under Lord North. Fox introduced a Bill transferring the control of the Company and all appointments to a small body of Commissioners appointed in the first instance by Parliament. The Bill, hotly supported by Burke and bitterly opposed by commercial interests, was passed by the House of Commons but thrown out by the House of Lords, with whom George III used his influence to defeat a measure which would have given the government and patronage of India to a Whig faction. The coalition government fell with its defeat and a new ministry was formed by William Pitt the younger, who in his turn introduced an East India Bill. This was defeated in the House of Commons, where he had not yet got a majority.

Having secured a majority in the elections of 1784 Pitt brought forward another Bill which passed into law. The provisions of this Act will be summarized in the next chapter, and it will suffice here to say that its enactment was followed by the resignation of Warren Hastings who had long felt the difficulties of his position in face of the opposition of the Court of Directors and was unwilling to work under the new Act of which the author also showed hostility to him. He left India in 1785 expecting high honours and found that the only return for his services was impeachment by the House of Commons.

**The impeachment** — The trial of Hastings before the House of Lords began in 1788 and ended seven years later with his complete acquittal. The impeachment by Burke as remarked byanny Burney displayed more of study than of truth more of invective than of justice and it is impossible not to sympathize with the plea of Hastings — The valour of others acquired I enlarged and gave hope and consistency to the dominion which you hold there. I gave you all and you have rewarded me with confinement disgrace and a life of impeachment. And it is strange that

Burke, with his passion for orderly government, neither recognized that this was the object for which Hastings had striven, nor extended to him the tolerance he had for what he called the great bad men of the old stamp, like Cromwell and Richelieu, because "they had long views and sanctified their ambition by aiming at the orderly rule of their country"

**The work of Warren Hastings.**—The outstanding feature of Hastings' administration was constructive statesmanship, the creation of a unified authority. He gave form and system to a government which had none, he established a strong central authority and substituted the reign of law for that of arbitrary will. The administrative fabric was by no means complete—it was left to others to build it up—but the foundations had been well and truly laid. Crude as the model of district administration appears if judged by modern standards, there was a stable and effective government, the grave scandals which had made the "Nabobs" of Bengal a byword had ceased, and the leaven of new principles was at work.

It was Hastings' great merit that he translated into practice the principle that the government should be for the good of the governed that the people have rights and their rulers obligations. Even in 1767 the Select Committee had enunciated 'the desire of the Company to prefer before all things the good order and well governing of the people to relieve the poor from oppression and vexation' but this remained merely a pious sentiment while the country was treated as a field for exploitation. As an instance of the new spirit we may quote the case of Tilman Henckell (appointed Judge-Magistrate of Jessore in 1761) who made it a guiding principle to protect the people from oppression. His reward was veneration: he was actually worshipped as a god by the s. c. manufacturers of the Sundarbans.

The extent to which Hastings was guided by what are now called pro-Indian sentiment was in striking contrast to the previous neglect of them. Subject to the primary necessity of maintaining law and order he placed the value of preserving Indian systems and in the efficacy of Indian agencies under supervision and control. It would be delayed

a grievance to deprive the people of the protection of their own laws and a wanton tyranny to require their obedience to others of which they were wholly ignorant " Let this be the working principle in our government of the people whose ease and welfare we are bound both by justice and policy to preserve, to make their laws sit as light on them as possible and to share with them the privileges of our own constitution where they are capable of partaking of them, consistently with their other rights and the welfare of the State" So far did he carry this policy that Indian magistrates continued to inflict the penalties of the old Muhammadan code including mutilation, *i e*, the loss of a limb, and unspecified terms of imprisonment, *i e*, prisoners were confined indefinitely until they made reparation for injuries or found security for good conduct When the British assumed direct management of the jails in 1792, it was found that 108 out of 300 prisoners in one district jail had been sentenced to imprisonment of this unlimited character

7. Hastings had his reward in the love of the people, which continued even when they had no longer anything to expect from him

Macaulay writes of the common Indian scene—' a cloud of crows pecking a sick man to death, no bad type of what happens in that country, as often as fortune descends on one who has been great and dreaded '—W. Hastings was however, under impeachment and to all appearances a fallen man so from turning to rend him the people submitted memorials eloquent of their gratitude to him Their gist was that he laid foundations of justice and upheld the pillars of the law the people lived in ease and peace no oppression or tyranny was permitted the inmost purpose of his heart the preservation of the religious persons of the people he promoted agriculture respected the learned and wise was upright in his dealings and courteous in his manner

The same note is struck in Warren Hastings' epitaph in Westminster Abbey which records—The Kingdom of Bengal seat of his government he ruled with a firm and equitable sway preserved it from invasion and while he secured to its inhabitants the enjoyment of their customs laws and blessings of peace was rewarded by their affection and gratitude

## CHAPTER IX.

### Cornwallis' Administration.

**Pitt's India Act of 1784 and the Charter Act of 1793.**—The India Act, which Pitt drew up at the age of 25, reformed and, with the supplementary provisions of the Charter Act\* of 1793, regulated the government of the British possessions in India until they passed under the direct rule of the Crown in 1858. A compromise between the claims of the Company and of Parliament, Pitt's Act introduced a system of dual government by bodies representing both. In all matters affecting the civil and military government, as well as the revenues of the British possessions, the Court of Directors henceforth acted under the direction and control of a Board of six Commissioners appointed by Parliament. This body was known as the Board of Control (though not so designated in the Act) and also as the India Board. At first the

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\* The Charter Acts are so called because they renewed the Company's charter from time to time. They also contained provisions defining the Company's powers and regulating the system of government. The Act of 1793 contained no less than 163 sections.



President of the Board was the Secretary of State for the Home Department, but by the Charter Act of 1793 (which renewed the Company's Charter for another 20 years) the office was made a separate salaried appointment. In course of time the President came to exercise the powers of the Board and to occupy much the same position as the Secretary of State for India has done since 1858. Commercial affairs were excluded from the control of the Board and still rested with the Court of Directors which also continued to exercise patronage but its privileges in this respect were limited by the Board having power to remove or recall any officer.

Pitt's Act left the Governor General in the same position as before in relation to the Council i.e. decisions were to be reached by a vote of the majority but Lord Cornwallis having refused to accept office unless he was given independent authority a special Act was passed in 1786 empowering the Governor General to override the Council and act on his own responsibility in matters of high importance. This was reaffirmed by the Charter Act of 1793. Pitt's Act further extended his control over the Governments of Bombay and Madras and gave injunctive

on administrative matters, of which the effect is to be seen in the measures of Cornwallis' administration, *e.g.*, the revenue system was to be made definitive and the rates of salaries and emoluments were to be determined. The vicious principle was laid down that promotions, both civil and military, were to be made according to seniority, and the age-limit for admission to service, whether as a writer or cadet, was fixed at 15 to 22. The minimum appears very low, but Pitt, who pleaded "guilty of the damnable crime of being a young man," may have had a tenderness for youth. Lastly, the acceptance of presents by British subjects holding any office was declared to be punishable as extortion.

The authority of Parliament was now put on a definite statutory basis, but in practice the decision of important questions rested with the President of the Board of Control in England and the Governor-General in India, both of whom were responsible to Parliament. The power of Parliament to intervene was emphasised by exhaustive inquiries into Indian administration, which were held by Select Committees before every renewal of the Company's Charter. The well-known

report of the Committee appointed before renewal of the charter in 1813 which known as the "Fifth Report" shows comprehensive character of these periodical inquiries. The President of the Board after it was made a separate office Henry Dundas whose long tenure of office (1793—1801) combined with his Scotch predilections led to the recruitment of many young Scotsmen for the Company's service and began that association of Scotland with the administration of India which has continued to the present day.

**The appointment of Lord Cornwallis.** On the resignation of Warren Hastings Mr (afterwards Sir John) Macpherson the senior Member of Council took charge as Governor General and held office till the arrival of Lord Cornwallis in September 1786. Lord Cornwallis had served as a general in the American War of Independence which had been practically brought to an end by his surrender of Yorktown to Washington. He enjoyed a high reputation and what was of more practical importance the confidence of the British Government. Its support and the policy



revenue was settled and the agency for its collection. First yearly settlements had been tried then a period of five years after which yearly settlements had been resumed. As for the agency an Indian staff responsible to the Nawab's Government had been employed at first this had given place to British supervisors under Provincial Councils at Murshidabad and Patna. British supervisors and Indian Diwans had then worked jointly, next came Indian agents (*amils*) under the supervision of six Provincial Councils and lastly British Collectors under the Committee of Revenue at Calcutta.

In 1786 the Court of Directors ordered that a settlement should be made for ten years and that the amount to be fixed as the land revenue should after receiving their final sanction be considered as the permanent and unalterable revenue. Cornwallis felt that further inquiries were necessary before such a momentous step was taken. He continued the yearly settlements till 1790 when a settlement for ten years was concluded which was declared permanent in 1793. This measure revolutionized the whole revenue system for not only were the

amounts to be paid as revenue declared irrevocable, but proprietary rights, which had never been enjoyed by private individuals, were given away by the State

To appreciate the effects of the measure, it is necessary to sketch the main features of the land revenue system hitherto in force

**The land revenue system.**—From time immemorial the sovereign power in India had a recognized right to a portion of the produce of the soil or of its value, unless it had alienated that right, *e g* , by making grants or assignments of land free of all payment for military, religious or charitable purposes. The State share of the value of the crops, which is called the land revenue, was based on an estimate of the capability of the land and of the value of the crops. The fixation of the amount to be paid, which is called the settlement of the land revenue, was revised from time to time. The settlement made by Todar Mal in the time of Akbar, for instance was revised in 1648, another revision was made by Murshid Kuli Khan in 1722, and a third six years later by his successor

Between the sovereign power and the actual cultivators there were intermediaries known as zamindars, i.e. landholders who received the cultivators' rents and made over its share to the State. Under the Mughal system of administration they were merely agents of the Government holding their lands in order to collect the land revenue and their emoluments were supposed to be limited to allowances amounting to 10 to 15 per cent of the revenue they collected. In practice they retained all that was left over after payment of the revenue and other duties. So long as they paid revenue regularly they were not disturbed and in course of time their position became both heritable and transferable by sale or gift. In other words they acquired the attributes of proprietorship but the Government never recognised any right of full proprietorship. It reserved to itself the right to dispose of any zamindari at its own discretion if the incumbent either declined to pay the revenue when it was assessed or afterwards failed in his payments.

As a result there were constant changes and Sir John Shore in 1788 stated that more than half of the considerable zamindaries in Bengal

could be traced to an origin within the last century and a half. A typical instance of this process was the huge Rajshahi zamindari extending over nearly 13,000 square miles and paying a revenue of Rs 25 lakhs. Of this Warren Hastings wrote in 1786 that it had "risen to its present magnitude during the course of the last eighty years by accumulating the property of a great number of dispossessed zamindars, although the ancestors of the present possessor had not by inheritance a right to the property of a single village within the whole zamindari." Another instance is that of the first Raja of Darbhanga, who was given a grant of Tirhut subject to payment of a revenue of one lakh of rupees a year. As a punishment for appropriating an undue share of the receipts, Ali Vardi Khan reduced him to the position of a mere revenue collector, allowing him only 2 per cent of the collections and a few villages. Mir Kasim Ali, again, confiscated a number of zamindaris and bestowed them on his own dependents. The practice of dispossessing zamindars and installing men who had no previous connection with the land went to still further lengths after 1765, when the system of yearly and quinquennial leases



was in force and a body of men known as farmers or renters sprung up

**Cornwallis' views** —In proposing that the land revenue should be fixed and unalterable Cornwallis was influenced by the necessity of taking effectual steps to facilitate recovery from the effects of the famine of 1770. One third, he said, of the Company's territory in Hindostan is now a jungle inhabited only by wild beasts. Will a ten years lease induce any proprietor to clear away that jungle and encourage the ryots to come and cultivate his lands? The even more important corollary by which the zamindars and farmers of revenue were given full proprietary rights was due to his inability to appreciate an agricultural economy in which there was not the English system of land tenure and to his conviction that the prosperity of the country depended on the existence of a class of landed proprietors — the most frugal and thrifty class of people — who alone should be entitled to the benefits of improved or increased cultivation.

The practice of making periodical revaluation of the land and of enhancing the revenue of an estate found to have an interest

produce was Cornwallis said, not taxation, but a declaration that the property of the landholder is at the absolute disposal of Government. The latter was the basic principle of the land system of India, but he could not understand it any more than the fact that the actual cultivators were equally entitled to be declared to have "a permanent property in the soil." He held that the zamindar was the lord of the soil, the rightful owner of the land, and argued that even if he did not enjoy proprietary rights, he should be given them.

Unlike the modern Socialist, he was persuaded that nothing could be so ruinous to the public interest as that the land should be retained as the property of the Government. He was convinced that "failing the claim of right of the zamindars, it would be necessary for the public good to grant a right of property in the soil to them or to persons of other descriptions." Agriculture, he urged, was the key industry of a country, on which depended both its manufactures and commerce. Cultivation would only extend if the landholders were allowed to reap the full benefit of improvements and of the reclamation of waste land. Any attempt of the State



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to participate in the produce of waste lands would discourage their cultivation and consequently prevent the growth of manufactures and export. If the Government required additional resources they should be held to be obtained from duties on commerce and not from any augmentation of the tax on land. It is not too much to say that he was a champion of landlords against other classes for the burden of increased taxation was to be borne by the general consumer while the land revenue was regarded as sacrosanct and the landlord was to be maintained in a privileged position.

agreed to the Permanent Settlement. It may be doubted whether any subsequent Prime Minister has given a problem of internal administration in India such close and prolonged attention. The Directors, of whom few knew anything of the subject, meekly acquiesced and Regulations were passed by the Governor-General's Council declaring the decennial settlement to be fixed and unalterable and giving those with whom it was made a statutory right of proprietorship.

### **Criticisms of the Permanent Settlement.—**

The measure has been the subject of much controversy. It was condemned by subsequent administrators, such as Lord Hastings, who in 1819 after admitting that there was never a measure conceived with a purer spirit of generous humanity and disinterested justice, came to the melancholy conclusion that this truly benevolent purpose, had, to his painful knowledge, subjected almost the whole of the country to the most grievous oppression. Lord Metcalfe, again, wrote—  
 'What was the price of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal? We not only relinquished the right of the Government to any

further revenue from land which was undoubtedly a great sacrifice, but what was much worse we destroyed all the existing property in land by creating a class of proprietors to whom we recklessly made over the property of others the allusion is to the rights of the cultivators

To turn to the views of an Indian administrator the case for and against the Permanent Settlement has been set forth by Mr R C Dutt C I E who at one time strongly supported it and at a later date bitterly condemned it In *The Peasantry of Bengal* (1874) he declaimed against it

Seldom in the annals of any country has hasty legislation been productive of effects so calamitous as the ill conceived Permanent Settlement On the head of Lord Cornwallis will rest the blame that the extortion of the zamindars has not to the present day ceased—that the ill feeling between the ryot and his master has advanced with the advance of years On his lordship's head will rest the guilt that the most fertile source of revenue in a fertile country has been closed up for ever—that the extension of cultivation has increased not the wealth of the cultivators but

the number of a class of impoverished idlers, the zamindars with a two-anna or one-anna share of the ancestral estate'' His later view, as briefly expressed in his *Brief History of Ancient and Modern Bengal* (1899), was "The settlement is an unqualified boon to the country. Cultivation has largely extended within the last hundred years, the income from lands has largely increased, and the increase has remained with the people and for the good of the people. The settlement has made the zamindars of Bengal a loyal, respectable and influential class, it has raised the middle classes of Bengal by a distribution of the profits from land through various means, it has conduced to the well-being of the cultivators themselves by preventing undue exaction from them by zamindars, it has helped the cause of progress and enlightenment by securing the well-being of the people, and it has given the people of Bengal the foremost place among all the nations of India. It must be admitted, however, that the cultivating classes of Behar have, through their ignorance, failed to reap the advantages which their brethren in Bengal have learnt to secure for themselves''



**Effect on cultivation**—One of the results of Cornwallis's *viz* the spread of cultivation was attained by the security of tenure consequent on the Permanent Settlement. Under the previous system of annual rents rack renting was so general as to prevent the spread of cultivation, which was of vital importance for a country which had yet fully recovered from the famine of 1770. As explained by Sir James Westland in his *Report on the District of Jessore* "I should suppose that a zemindar would improve his land or extend his cultivation when he knew that the Government would at once demand all the advantage that might accrue and no zamindar would neglect the improvement of his estate when he knew that the certain result would be an increased demand and an indeterminate increase of demand on the part of the Collector. The mutual distrust between Government and zamindar and riot—the natural consequence of the annual settlement system especially when its principles were laid down as a basis for taxation—barred all progress."

In 1790 the Collector of Jessore stated as a well known fact that cultivation had decreased in every district had decreased since 1772. The change effected in the n

years may be realized from the fact that whereas in 1790 the demand for tenants was greater than the supply and zamindars were competing for them, in 1820 cultivators were competing for holdings. The change of conditions in Bihar may similarly be illustrated by the case of the district of Champaran, which is described as follows in Hamilton's *Description of Hindostan* (1820)—“Sarkar Champaran or Bettiah suffered severely during the great famine of 1770, when almost half the inhabitants are supposed to have perished. Besides this, the zamindars of Champaran having for many years been deprived of their lands, which were leased out to ignorant and rapacious farmers of the revenue, they experienced such oppression that the majority of the population which survived the famine were obliged to abscond, leaving the country almost a desert. Since that melancholy epoch the zamindars have been re-established by the decennial settlement, many of the ancient inhabitants have returned and cultivation has been prosecuted.” Mr Ascoli in his *Early Revenue History of Bengal* contends that the Permanent Settlement did not lead to an extension of cultivation, but he bases his

argument on the case of the Dacca district and his conclusion appears to be vitiated by the exceptional conditions caused by the famine of 1787. The Magistrate of Dacca reported in 1802 'There are large tracts which still show the effect of the famine of 1787 and which from the vast depopulation occasioned by that scourge are so overrun with jungle and annoyed with elephants and other wild beasts that they have become almost deserts.'

On the other hand it might reasonably be argued that the maintenance of peace and settled order with a consequent increase of population would in any case have led to an increase of cultivation and that there was in fact such an extension in temporarily settled areas. On this point it will be apposite to quote the remarks of Lord Metcalfe 'There can be no doubt that the cultivation of Bengal must have greatly increased since the formation of the Permanent Settlement but this is no proof that it would not have greatly increased with good management under other modes of settlement. Cultivation has greatly increased in the western provinces since they came into our possession

whether more or less proportionately in comparison with Bengal, I have not the means of knowing, but the increase has been immense, and increase of revenue has accompanied it, which, of course, has not been the case in Bengal. Taking into account the greater difficulties that cultivation has to contend with in the western provinces, I doubt whether it has not increased there as surprisingly in the same space of time as in Bengal. The probability, however, is that cultivation will increase more under a permanent settlement than any other, although great increase may take place without it."

**Sacrifice of revenue.**—Unquestionably the Government, both in Bengal and Bihar, has sustained a heavy loss by limiting its demand to the amount assessed in 1790. In the first place, the inquiries made up to that time were not sufficiently detailed to justify a settlement in perpetuity, and a substantial portion of the land escaped assessment. In the districts of Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga, for instance, no less than two-thirds of the area was unassessed—this in spite of the fact that the basis of assessment in Bihar was generally more accurate than in Bengal,

because the organization of village officials being still effective, the facilities of obtaining information were greater. In the second place the State gave up any share of the unearned increment which has accrued as a result of the continued progress of the country. The land revenue now bears little relation to the greatly enhanced value of the land. The total gross rental at the time of the Permanent Settlement so far as could be ascertained was Rs 4½ crores whereas by 1901 it had risen to Rs 16½ crores. Consequently the land revenue instead of being nine tenths of the rental according to the proportion sanctioned by the Permanent Settlement is now only about one-fourth.

It must not be supposed that the whole of the increase of the rent roll has been monopolized by the landlords—it has been shared in by their subordinate tenure holders—but the fact remains that in many cases the revenue under modern conditions practically amounts to a quit rent while the State has been debarred from increasing it though the country requires additional resources to meet the increased charges incidental to progress and the development of the functions of government.

**The effect on the landlords.**—It has often been objected to the Permanent Settlement that it converted into landed proprietors a set of parvenu middlemen having no connexion with the land except that of collecting the rents and that, by the operation of its stringent clauses about full and regular payment of revenue, it more or less extinguished the old landed aristocracy. It has even been said that within ten years a complete revolution took place in the constitution and ownership of the estates which were the subject of the settlement. It is perfectly true that mere middlemen, whose only status was that of rent collectors or revenue farmers, were transformed into landlords; it is also true that many of the great zamindars were split up into small estates and a new class of landlords introduced. This was especially the case in Bengal. In Bihar, however, the settlement served to rescue Rajas and zamindars from the farmers of revenue who had been placed over them and to recognize as proprietors many whose ancestors had exercised the power of semi-independent chiefs and who were about to be submerged.

The misfortunes, moreover, of the old zamindars in Bengal were not due solely to

their having to pay revenue punctually without having the means of ensuring the prompt realization of their rents. A contributing factor was the power of free and full transfer of their estates and the facilities afforded to creditors to enforce payment of debts. It is ' says Sir William Hunter in *Bengal MS Records*, "recorded on indisputable authority that a large proportion of the transfers though nominally for arrears of the land tax were in reality the result of underhand arrangements with a view to securing that private creditors and mortgagees should acquire the estates of their debtors with an unquestionable title and free of all encumbrances. While many of the historical houses fell beneath the guillotine of the revenue sale laws a still larger number were extinguished by their private creditors and the civil courts."

There were two noticeable consequences of this change. In the first place small estates were substituted for great zamindaris from which also they differed in being an accumulation of scattered parcels of land instead of compact properties extending over a large area. The other consequence was that many estates passed into the hands of absentee

landlords without local connexions Zamindari, it has been said, became more of a profession and less of a position. The evils of absenteeism began to spring up. It has been argued, however, that the disappearance of the large landlords was not all loss. Sir James Westland, for instance, writing of a typical Bengal district, Jessore, said "Although the ruin of the zamindars cannot but be looked on as matter of regret, it was not without many great advantages. Hampered on every side with debt, they could do nothing for the benefit of their estates, having absolutely no capital to work on. The new purchasers of the large zamindaris were for the most part men of business from Calcutta. They had often got their first footing through having lent large sums to zamindars, and at all events they were men who had by their own exertions amassed some degree of wealth. They had consequently, so early as 1801, acquired the reputation of being good managers of their estates, they began looking into the old subtenures, they extended the cultivation and ceased to oppress the ryots, through whose co-operation alone improvement can be expected."



One of the great hereditary zamindars of Bengal saved his property by his shrewdness in following the example of Government. This was the Raja of Burdwan who made a kind of permanent settlement with tenure holders (*patnidars*), binding them by terms and conditions similar to those by which he was himself bound to the Government. His example was largely followed in Bengal with the result that landlords became recipients of a fixed annual income from their estates. The practice was given legal validity by the Patni Sale Law of 1819 by which the *patni* tenures were liable to summary sale in satisfaction of the zamindar's demand of rent just as his estate was liable to sale in default of payment of the land revenue. This system however involving as it did the abandonment of responsibility for the development of estates and of direct relations with the ryots was diametrically opposed to the intentions of the author of the Permanent Settlement.

The position of the tenantry—The charge most commonly levelled against the Permanent Settlement is that it inflicted

grave injury on the cultivators by making no provision to safeguard their rights while they were subjected to grievous oppression by the sequelæ of laws passed in the interests of the landlords. In justice to Cornwallis it must be predicated that he was perfectly aware of the need for protecting the tenants and that he intended to secure for them immunity from enhancement of rents. It was specifically stated in Regulation I of 1793 that power was reserved to legislate for their protection and welfare, but Cornwallis left India in 1793 and though he returned in 1805 it was only to die after a few months.

Regulation VIII of 1793 enjoined the landlords to conduct themselves with good faith and moderation towards their tenureholders and tenants. Orders were given that the landlords were to give *pattas* or leases specifying the rents payable by the ryots, and the responsibility of enforcing their issue was laid upon the Collectors. Hortatory clauses, without penal sanction, have no binding force, and the provisions about the *pattas* overlooked the fundamental principle of administration that it is futile to pass orders unless steps can be, and are taken to

have them carried out. It was utterly impossible for the Collectors to make the land lords issue correct *pattas*, for the sums payable by tenants could not be ascertained without a survey of their holdings and a record of their rights for which the Collectors had neither the time nor the staff. The net result was that while the sums payable by the zamindars to Government were fixed those payable by their tenants were left indeterminate. It is beyond question that the Permanent Settlement left a heritage of agrarian trouble because it was concluded before the relative rights of the zamindars and ryots had been defined and recorded.

The orders about *pattas* remained practically a dead letter the ryots refusing to accept them. Nor can this be wondered at. The Collector of Rajshahi in 1811 found that there were as few *pattas* as ever and remarked— 'It will naturally be asked how does this happen? The only explanation I can offer is that the rights of the ryots have never been determined or if determined are well understood. The consequence is the zamindar who pretends to consider his ryot

a tenant-at-will, tenders a *patta* at an exorbitant rate, the ryot, who considers himself (from the circumstance of having held his lands for a very long period) a species of *mukararidar* " i e , entitled to hold permanently at a fixed rate of rent, " conceives that he is entitled to hold his lands at a fixed rent and therefore refuses the *patta*, the zamindar distrains and the ryot is ruined "

It must not however be supposed that the ryot only had grievances For some years after the Permanent Settlement the landlord was largely at the mercy of his tenants, owing to the amount of waste land and the comparative paucity of cultivators If oppressed by one landlord, a ryot could easily get land cheaply from another The landlord had to pay his revenue in full or lose his estate, but he had inadequate means of enforcing payment of rents from his tenants. To realize arrears, he had to lodge a suit and secure a decree, and in the meantime the ryot might abscond The experience of the Collector of Jessore, who was in a stronger position than a private landlord, shows what difficulties the latter had to face In 1799 he complained that the ryots in Government

that he had reason to believe that ' almost all the Collectors are under the name of some relation or friend deeply engaged in commerce and by their influence as collectors and judges of *Adawlut* become the greatest oppressors of the manufacture

The profits that could be made in this way may be illustrated by the case of Francois Grand the first Collector of Tirhut whose wife was famous for her liaison with Sir Phillip Francis and after her divorce for her marriage with the French statesman Talleyrand Grand obtained damages of Rs 20 000 from Francis under decree of the Supreme Court and proceeded to make a small fortune by commercial undertakings while Collector of Tirhut from 1782 to 1787 For this he was removed to another office by Cornwallis and ultimately dismissed He was perfectly frank on the subject writing in an account of his meritorious services in Tirhut I introduced the manufacturing of indigo after the European manner encouraged the establishment of indigo works and plantations erected three at my own expense and thus procured a fortune of £10 000 sterling My manufactories my

houses land, furniture, tents, equipages, horses, boats, stood upon a valuation of £10 000 more " He expected pity for his hard fate in being deprived of a chance of increasing his fortune by continuing in his station and extending his manufactories " By one stroke of His Lordship's pen, every hope and fair-built prospect was completely blasted Thus the blow was struck, and from that day I fell, perhaps, never to rise again View the portrait and feel " As a pioneer of the indigo industry, be it added, he is entitled to the gratitude of North Bihar, where it was for over half a century the staple industry and a source of prosperity

Cornwallis enunciated sound principles for the determination of salaries It was necessary, he laid down, to pay officers working in a climate, where a continuation of health was so precarious, salaries " sufficiently liberal to enable them to live in a decent and comfortable manner and to make such annual savings as to give them a prospect of being able in a moderate number of years to spend the latter part of their days in easy circumstances at home " These elementary principles were not altogether palatable to the

It was time that the change was made. There had been scandalous delay in the trial of offenders sent before the Daroghas by the Magistrates. Since 1786, the latter had power to try petty cases of pilfering, assault and abuse and to impose sentences of four days imprisonment but were otherwise simply police officers. The Daroghas were corrupt; wealthy offenders could purchase immunity for atrocious crimes; murderers could escape prosecution by compounding with the heirs of their victims. The barbarous punishment of mutilation was also frequently inflicted under the Muhammadan law. The records of the Chittagong district show that dacoits were punished by impalement down to 1782. Such savage penalties were abolished in 1791 when 7 years imprisonment was substituted for the loss of one limb and 14 years imprisonment for the loss of two. Otherwise the Muhammadan law was left intact; indeed a Regulation issued in 1790 laid down that the decisions of the Courts should in all cases be regulated by the Muhammadan law.

**The Regulations** — A code of regulations for the guidance of the different courts was

compiled by Sir George Barlow, who afterwards (in 1805) succeeded Cornwallis as Governor-General. this was practically an enlarged edition of Impey's Code. When he prepared it, the Supreme Court questioned the power of government to make laws and Sir William Jones suggested the use of the term *Régulations* or Rules and Orders instead of laws. This suggestion was acted upon by Cornwallis, who crossed out the word "laws" wherever it occurred in Barlow's draft and substituted Rules or Regulations. It was at the same time laid down that all laws promulgated by Government should be printed and published.

According to Barlow, when Cornwallis arrived, the Government was a despotism. It had the sole power of making laws, and it exercised the power of administering them as well as all the functions of executive authority. He claimed that a new constitution was established by Cornwallis, which was completed by Wellesley, and that it gave security to the rights of person and property by affording Indian subjects the means of obtaining redress against any infringement of those rights. The claim appears to be reasonable. There is no doubt that Cornwallis'



reforms changed the whole system of administration and were in many respects not only radical but salutary

**Formation of districts** —Many of the districts were of enormous and unwieldy size often because their basis was the existence of large estates Murshidabad for instance included the great estates of Birbhum and Vishnupur of which the last extended over a large part of the present district of Bankura Rajshahi which was co-extensive with the huge Rajshahi or Natto zamindari included the present districts of Rajshahi Malda Bogra and Pabna as well as a tract south of the Ganges The district of Bihar was composed of the present Patna district and the north of Gaya district The south of the district last named was part of Ramgarh a huge amorphous district including the greater part of Chota Nagpur A general redistribution was effected between 1757 and 1793 and the province was parcelled out into 25 districts of more manageable size

**Disorders in Bengal** —Throughout practically the whole of Cornwallis's administration there were disorders in Birbhum and

Bankura, which in more settled times might have been dignified with the name of rebellion. They have been described in detail in Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal* and we need only quote the official summary given by the Collector of Birbhum in 1792. "Birbhum is surrounded on the south-west and west by the great western jungle, which has long protected from the vigilance of justice numerous bands of dacoits, who there take refuge and commit their depredations on the neighbouring defenceless cultivators. Towns once populous are now deserted; the manufactures are decayed, and where commerce flourished only a few poor and wretched hovels are seen. When the places on the frontier became, from their poverty, no longer an object to the dacoits, their depredations were extended into the heart of the district, and towns have been plundered and people murdered within two *kos* " (*i e* , four miles) " of the Collector's house by banditti amounting to upwards of three thousand men "

Bankura suffered no less than Birbhum. The town of Vishnupur was sacked in 1787 and was again taken a few years later by a robber band 1,000 strong. The raids were

put down by the use of military force and the co-operation of the cultivators themselves. crowds of infuriated peasants setting on parties of the dacoits and beating them to death.

Another disturbed area was the tract to the west of Bogra which was a kind of "no man's land" far removed from any authority. It was infested by bands of dacoits—one headed by a woman—who carried on their depredations both by land and water. The zamindars were almost equally lawless as explained in a report of 1787—"The principal zamindars in most parts of these districts and I believe I may venture to add in most parts of the country too have always a banditti ready to let loose on such of their unfortunate neighbours as have any property worth seizing on and in accomplishing which the lives of the unhappy sufferers are seldom spared."

## CHAPTER X.

### The administration of Wellesley and Minto.

**Wellesley's policy.**—There is little of interest to Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in the administration of Sir John Shore (1793—98), who on his retirement was raised to the peerage as Lord Teignmouth. The policy of non-interference was followed in accordance with the Charter Act of 1793, which had laid down that the pursuit of schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India were repugnant to the wish, honour and policy of the British nation. A forward policy was adopted by Lord Mornington, better known by his subsequent title of the Marquess Wellesley. When he assumed office as Governor-General in 1798, Bengal (including Bihar) formed the greater part of the Company's possessions. Before he was recalled seven years later, the Maratha province of Orissa had been annexed, territory had been taken from Oudh and added to the Bengal Presidency, which now marched on the north with the Punjab and on the south with Madras, and the British protectorate had been established over the Indian princes.

This expansion of British dominion was due to measures taken to counteract the designs of the French under Napoleon and partly also to Wellesley's imperialistic ideas. A local illustration of the application of these ideas was the construction of Government House at Calcutta on his argument that India should be governed from a palace and not from a counting house. Calcutta was also developed on his initiative into a town more worthy of a capital a Town Improvement Committee which was appointed by him carrying out improvements with funds raised by lotteries.

**Development of the Civil Service**—The influence of his ideas is also seen in the new conception of the functions and status of the Civil Service. The civil servants of the East India Company, he said, 'can no longer be considered as the agents of a commercial concern. They are in fact the ministers and officers of a powerful sovereign; they must now be viewed in this capacity with reference not to their nominal but to their real occupations. They are required to discharge the functions of magistrates, judges, ambassadors and governors of

provinces            Their duties are those of statesmen in every other part of the world, with no other characteristic differences than the obstacles opposed by an unfavourable climate, by a foreign language, and by the peculiar usages and laws of India, and by the manners of its inhabitants ”

**The College of Fort William.**—The youths sent out as writers by the Directors were ill prepared for this high calling, arriving in the country with no previous knowledge of its laws, languages and customs    Wellesley's view was that though the foundation of their education must be laid in Great Britain, it must be completed systematically after their arrival in India    He accordingly proposed the establishment of a college in Calcutta for the thorough training of all the Company's young officers, and in 1800, without waiting for the sanction of the Directors, he started the college in Writers' Buildings, Calcutta under the name of the College of Fort William    The Directors, with their usual narrow commercial outlook, would not accept the scheme, and the college was reduced to an institution for teaching Oriental languages to those officers only who were sent to Bengal

Even though its scope was curtailed the College did valuable work. Hitherto ignorance of the languages of the country had left the officers of the Company largely dependent on Indian subordinates who misused their power. Subordinates were enriched but the people suffered wrong and the administration incurred discredit. Owing to the necessity for vernacular text books the College helped in creating a Bengali prose literature hitherto non-existent. It published a number of useful publications on the laws and languages of India as well as purely literary works. Several of the staff were distinguished men such as Doctor Carey the Serampore missionary who taught Bengali and Sanskrit, Colebrooke a Judge of the Sadr Diwani Adalat who was an unpaid professor of Hindu law and Sanskrit and Iswar Chandra Vidya-sagar who was a Head Pandit (1841). It remains to add that the insistence by Wellesley of the need for training recruits to the Company's civil service led to the establishment in 1805 of the Haileybury College at which they studied for two years before joining their appointments in India. This College was in existence till 1858 when it was

bolished on the introduction of the competitive system, *i e*, the appointment of members of the civil service on the results of competitive examinations

### **Change in the functions of Government.—**

One sensible measure of decentralization carried out by Wellesley was the abdication of its judicial powers by the central government, *i e*, the Governor-General and Members of Council, who had hitherto not only possessed the sole executive and exclusive legislative authority, but also constituted the supreme judicial courts *i e*, the Sadr Diwani and Sadr Nizamat Adalats. Wellesley argued that the union of legislative and judicial power in the same body was inconsistent with proper principles of government. It may also be doubted whether the system satisfied the requirements of justice, for cases were decided in chamber, neither the parties nor their pleaders appearing. A staff of judges was now appointed for the two courts.

**Private trade.**—The first blow against the trading monopoly of the Company had been struck by the Charter Act of 1793, which required the Company to reserve 3,000 tons



and Grant came out in an American ship, also without a license and not being allowed to settle in British territory, made their headquarters at the Danish colony of Serampore, where Carey joined them.

Apart from their missionary efforts the Serampore missionaries did great work in promoting the advancement of learning, secular as well as religious. They were a vivifying influence at a time when Sanskrit learning was the prerogative of a small intellectual class and Bengali prose literature had still to be created. They started a printing press from which issued the first books printed in Bengali if we exclude those *bibliotheca* the Government Regulations a Bengali history of Pratapaditya by Ram Ram Basu & as soon followed by a Bengali grammar compiled by Carey for the use of students at the College of Fort William. The missionaries were the first to translate the Bible into the languages of India they also translated into English Indian classics such as the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. They published the first Bengali newspaper and they were pioneers in the field of Bengali education.

Wellesley raised no objection to additional missionaries coming to Calcutta or to their preaching in the interior. He himself was liberal, not to say catholic in his views, making donations impartially on behalf of the Company to the Danish church at Serampore and the Hindu shrine at Kali Ghat in Calcutta. Ward records the fact that "a deputation from the Company went in a procession to Kalee Ghaut—the most opulent and popular shrine in the metropolis—and presented Rs 5,000 to the idol in the name of the Company for the success which had attended the British arms."

**Abolition of child sacrifice.**—The Serampore missionaries had a friend at court in Mr Udny, a Member of Council (1801), who urged Wellesley to put a stop to the sacrifice of children at the festival of Ganga Sagar held annually on Saugor Island. These sacrifices were made in fulfilment of religious vows, *e g*, a woman would vow to make an offering of a child in hope of further offspring. The victims were thrown into the sea to be drowned or devoured by sharks and crocodiles. Carey, who was called on for a report on the question, after consulting the pandits, recommended the abolition of the practice, which

was not based on any religious imperative and in 1802 a law was passed prohibiting it which was enforced by sepoy's being sent to prevent any attempts at sacrifice. The practice quietly died out without any complaints of interference with Hindu customs.

**The Chuar rebellion**—In 1798-99 an outbreak occurred in the south west of the Bankura district and the north west of the Midnapore district to which the name of the Chuar rebellion is generally given. The term Chuar means in Bengali a savage and was applied to the Bhumi and other aboriginal tribes in Bankura, Midnapore and Manbhum. The rising was due to Government having resumed or assessed to rents the lands of the *paiks*—men who formed a kind of police force and were remunerated for their services by grants of land which they held either free of rent or subject to a quit rent. Their lands having been taken from them or rents having been imposed to provide for the charges of regular police they took up arms in order to recover what they regarded as their immemorial rights. The turbulent jungle tribes made common cause with them and the

insurgents found leaders in zamindars who had lost their estates by the operation of the revenue sale laws

The first outbreak occurred in 1798 in Bankura, where it was headed by one such zamindar. He ravaged the country with 1 500 men and after plundering and burning down 30 villages was captured and put on his trial. He had, however, to be released as no one dare give evidence against him, and he took the field again in 1799, when the rising spread to Midnapore. A large tract of country was laid waste, the cultivators flying before the Chuars to take refuge in Midnapore and other places held by the Company's sepoy. The Chuars carried fire and slaughter to within a few miles of Midnapore and even threatened to attack that town. The ordinary police and military forces of the district were quite unable to cope with the banditti, as they are called in the old records, but eventually the Chuar bands were suppressed with the help of a strong body of troops. The country remained disturbed for some time, and a special district, called the Jungle Mahals, with headquarters at Bankura, had to be formed out of the wilder and less

accessible parts of Bankura Midnapore and Manbhum Many years elapsed however before the extreme north of Midnapore was pacified A contemporary account states

Although within 60 miles of Calcutta up to 1816 owing to peculiar local obstacles the authority of Government had never been firmly established in this tract (Bagri) The leaders of the Chuars continued to act as if they had been independent of any Government and endeavoured to maintain their predominance by the most atrocious acts of rapine

**Appointment of Lord Minto** —After the recall of Wellesley Lord Cornwallis returned for a second term of office but died in a few months (1805) An unseemly quarrel then arose between the Directors and the Government of Lord Grenville and Fox over the appointment of a Governor General owing to an attempt of the Ministers to usurp the Directors prerogative of patronage Sir George Barlow the senior Member of Council was first appointed but was recalled by the Government in order to make room for a nominee of its own This was Lord Lauderdale who was obnoxious to the Directors He

held the tenets, so pernicious in their view, of free trade, *i e*, the abolition of the Company's trade monopoly. He had avowed revolutionary doctrines during the French revolution, affecting a dress in keeping with them, and calling himself Citizen Lauderdale. Added to these objections, he was said to have a face resembling that of a cut-throat!

The Court of Directors had the right of appointment, subject to the veto of the Government, under the Acts of 1784 and 1793 and the recall of Barlow was an abuse of power on the part of the Ministers. A compromise was arrived at by the appointment of Lord Minto, Barlow being solaced with the Governorship of Madras. Minto had long been associated with Indian affairs. He had brought forward the unsuccessful motion for the impeachment of Sir Elijah Impey, he had been one of the members of the House of Commons who impeached Warren Hastings, and at the time of his appointment, he was President of the Board of Control.

**Minto's administration.**—The six years of Minto's administration (1807—13) were generally peaceful and prosperous. The policy of non-intervention and abstention

from entangling alliances was followed. Wellesley's maxim had been that an insult offered to the British flag at the mouth of the Ganges should be resented as promptly and as fully as an insult offered at the mouth of the Thames. Very different views now prevailed. No action was taken to stop the encroachment of the Burmese and Nepalese on the frontiers or the outrages of the Pindaris in the interior. Minto's Government contended itself with defensive measures designed to prevent the Pindaris extending their incursions into British territory. These measures were not effectual: one raid for instance was made into Mirzapur and South Bihar in 1812 and Minto's Government admitting that they were merely palliatives contemplated the adoption at some future date of operations which would strike at the root of this great and increasing evil. In foreign politics the designs of Napoleon constituted the chief danger. To counteract them relations were entered into with Afghanistan and Persia and the islands of Mauritius, Bourbon and Reunion and other French colonies were taken.

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**Capture of Mauritius**—The sea-borne trade of India suffered heavy losses during

the long Napoleonic wars. The French had a base in Mauritius from which their cruisers and privateers sallied forth and to which they returned with their prizes. The value of property belonging to Calcutta merchants which was captured in 15 years was put down at fifteen millions sterling. In 1807, the loss in six weeks only was £300,000. Minto determined to stop these depredations, an expedition sent in 1810 captured the islands of Mauritius and Bourbon, and the French fleets disappeared from the Indian seas.

**Dacoity.**—In the sphere of internal administration the reform of most pressing importance was the suppression of the brigandage called dacoity. It is difficult at the present day to realize the extensiveness of this form of lawlessness in Bengal, the passive submission of the people and the miseries they endured. "A monstrous and disorganized state of society", wrote Minto in 1810, "existed under the eye of the supreme British authorities and almost at that very seat of Government to which the country might justly look for safety and protection. The mischief could not wait for a slow remedy, the people were perishing almost in our sight. Every



week's delay was a doom of slaughter and torture against the defenceless inhabitants of very populous territories '.

The language at first sight appears that of hyperbole but it is on record that robberies murders and the most atrocious and deliberate cruelties were committed with few exceptions and with slight modifications of atrocity in every part of Bengal in one district (Nadia) 70 persons were on an average tortured by the dacoits every month Bengal which had been longest under a settled government was far more subject to brigandage than more recent acquisitions and less civilized tracts Minto ascribed this anomaly to five causes in a letter which throws a vivid light on the unsettled state of Bengal at the time

These were—

(1) The riches of the country have presented the temptation of good plunder

(2) The long security which the country has enjoyed from foreign enemies and the consequent loss of martial habits and character have made the people of Bengal soft and enervated that no resistance is to be apprehended in the act nor punishment afterward

(3) The venality of the police, on whom the Magistrates relied and by whom they were kept in ignorance “ In many instances the Magistrate has remained entirely ignorant of a very large proportion of the offences committed within his jurisdiction and has congratulated himself on the good order and exact police of a country in which great bodies of armed banditti have been robbing and burning the villages and murdering and torturing the people all round him ”

(4) The protection given by zamindars to the dacoits “ The zemindars have very commonly no other idea of an estate than as a field to plunder in nor of the influence which property gives than as a power to extort and pillage amongst the people subject to them The leaders of the dacoits find it in their interest to conciliate this class of people, and by a participation in the plunder, or by other inducements, obtain a secure refuge and protection in their estates

(5) “ The best security of all, however, enjoyed by the dacoits has been the intimidation of the unhappy people who are the victims of their rapine and cruelty It is impossible to imagine, without seeing it, the extraordinary dandy they had obtained over the inhabitants

at large of the countries which have been the principal scenes of their atrocities. They had established a terrorism as perfect as that which was the foundation of the French republican power and in truth the sirdars or captains of the band were esteemed and even called the Hakim or ruling power while the Government did not possess either authority or influence enough to obtain from the people the smallest aid towards their own protection.

If a whole village was destroyed not a man was found to complain. If a family was half murdered and half tortured the tortured survivors could not be prevailed upon to appear against the criminals. Men have been found with their limbs and half the flesh of their bodies consumed by slow fire who persisted in saying that they had fallen into their own fire or otherwise denying all knowledge of the event that could tend to the conviction or detection of the offenders. They knew if they spoke they would either themselves or the remaining members of their families be dispatched the same evening.

The step hitherto taken to check the evil had at all failed the remedy had even



complainants and witnesses against their persecutors. The evil was not however eradicated and dacoity long continued to be a blot on the administration.

**Improvement of administration**—Despite this survival of brigandage there was a steady improvement of administration and a general increase of prosperity. The Parliamentary Committee appointed before the renewal of the Company's Charter reported in 1812 after an impartial and exhaustive investigation that though imperfections existed in the internal administration of Bengal British rule had brought under the yoke of law the whole of the country, freed it from foreign depredations and raised upon a new basis of order and industry. Men have its principles and exercise its virtues and half the integrity and ability consumed by slow fire preceding it. The impression that they had fallen the Bengal provinces otherwise denying a enjoyed for a period of that could tend paralleled in Oriental history of the offenders them close in the arms they would catch the great mass of the people, members of the in to Minto himself the same evening corruption had been outdone to check dropped the policy of the remedy had been

its officers properly “ A more pure and highly honourable administration does not exist than that of the E I Company in India ”

### **Buchanan-Hamilton's statistical survey.—**

The first statistical survey of the districts was undertaken, under Lord Minto's orders, by Dr Francis Buchanan better known by his subsequent name of Buchanan-Hamilton. During the years 1807—14 he made a full and comprehensive survey of the agricultural and economic conditions of the districts of Dinajpur, Rangpur, Purnea, Bhagalpur, Bihar and Shahabad. His reports were contained in 25 folio volumes of manuscript, which were deposited in the India Office and never published, but copious extracts are given in Montgomery Martin's *History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India* (1838).

**Economic conditions.**—These reports illuminate the rural economy of Bengal and Bihar at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In Dinajpur, for instance, silver and cowries constituted the currency. Cowries, of which 5,760 to 5,920 went to the rupee, were used

for most transactions. A loaded ox which, incidentally only the wealthiest money changers used could carry as much as Rs 15 worth of these bulky substitutes for coins. The condition of the poorer class was miserable judged by modern standards. The poorer cultivators very seldom tasted milk, their supply of salt and oil was scanty. The lowest classes often had to go altogether without salt and in place of it used the ashes of various plants. The only fish that they had was what they caught in the ditches but Buchanan Hamilton gravely assures us the greatest deprivation from which they suffered was the scarcity of tobacco.

servant'' Slavery or serfdom was common, the price of an adult male was Rs 15 to Rs 20, of a youth 16 years of age Rs 12 to Rs 20, and of a girl aged 8 to 10 years Rs 5 to Rs 15 In some parts the people were so poor that they could afford little or no salt, they substituted for it wood ashes or eked out their scanty supply by mixing ashes with it The beggars had a miserable lot '' When a wretch is about to expire, he is usually carried out to the road and allowed to die, or, if he is suddenly carried off, his death is carefully concealed until night, when the corpse is privately thrown out to the dogs ''

In Shahabad, if any destitute person was in danger of dying, his neighbours took him to the next village and left him, if he survived, he was planted on another village, and so bandied about till he died In this latter district, male slaves or serfs sold for Rs 15 and females for Rs 20 each, male domestics were given pay of eight annas to one rupee a month, besides their food and clothes Few of the cultivators' houses had either windows or doors, the place of which was supplied by holes or openings in the walls



**The missionary question**—None of Minto's measures aroused such controversy as his treatment of the Serampore missionaries. They came into conflict with Government because some publications issuing from their press contained attacks on the Hindu religion and Mahomed the Prophet. Minto in 1807 established a censorship over their press to the extent that all works intended for circulation in British territory had to be submitted to Government for inspection and an imprimatur obtained. In the same year preaching by Indian Christians in Calcutta was suspended temporarily and in 1813 one English and five American missionaries who desired to settle in India were expelled.

There was ample justification for the steps

arouse religious animosity, and its Indian missionaries were preaching the same inflammatory matter and the same exhortations to civil dissension as had been printed. The historian Marshman, a champion of the Serampore mission and himself the son of one of its founders, admits that "the proceedings of 1807 were prompted by the issue of tracts which were considered likely to endanger the security of the empire and of which one was, without question, objectionable." It should be added that the circulation of translations was not objected to if unaccompanied by comments on the religions of the country and that a censorship already existed in the case of the Calcutta newspapers.

The expulsion of missionaries six years later was on a different footing. It may be explained in the case of the Americans by the fact that Great Britain was at the time at war with the United States, and in the case of the Englishman it may be said that standing orders were enforced, as he had no license to settle in India, but those orders were not enforced in other cases. However this may be, the question was set at rest by the Charter Act of 1813 which authorized the ingress of missionaries, under the general head of those

desirous of going to and remaining in India, for the introduction of religious and moral improvement or for other lawful purposes provided that they obtained the permission of the Directors or the Board of Control. The same Act sanctioned the creation of a bishopric for India with an archdeaconry for each Presidency. The first Bishop was Middleton who founded Bishop's College at Sibpur near Calcutta.

## CHAPTER XI.

### The Conquest and Settlement of Orissa.

**Negotiations with the Marathas.**—After the British had established their ascendancy in Bengal and Bihar, they endeavoured to induce the Marathas to cede the province of Orissa, the possession of which would have enabled them to secure continuity in their territories and uninterrupted communication by land with Madras. It would also have put an end to the irritating raids made from time to time into the British district of Midnapore as well as to the friction caused by the existence of a small Maratha enclave (the Pataspur *pargana*) in that district. Negotiations were opened in 1766 by Clive, whose agent, Motte, had a dual mission. He was sent to buy diamonds at Sambalpur for Clive, who wanted to use them as a convenient means of remitting money to England, and he was to take the opportunity *en route* of proposing to the Maratha Governor at Cuttack the cession of Orissa in return for an annual tribute. The negotiations failed and a subsequent attempt made by Warren Hastings

to secure a lease of the sea board districts was equally infructuous. Bengal remained exposed to attack through Orissa as was proved in 1779-80 during the first Maratha war when a confederacy having been formed by the Marathas, the Nizam of Hyderabad and Hyder Ali of Mysore with the object of expelling the British from India, the Maratha Raja of Nagpur (or Berar) sent an army of 30,000 men to invade Bengal through Orissa. The danger was averted by Warren Hastings who bought off the Raja and obtained permission for the passage of British troops through Orissa to Madras. Advantage was taken of this in 1781 to despatch a force under Colonel Pearse to reinforce Sir C. Coote—a wonderful march of 700 miles through unknown country.

**The conquest of Orissa, 1803**—On the outbreak of the second Maratha war Wellesley arranged for the invasion of Orissa on three sides. The main attack was made by an army of 10,000 men marching north from Ganjam. A small force of 2,000 men was sent by sea from Calcutta to Balasore. A third column marched south from Balasore on the border of Midnapore while a reserve was stationed at the town of Midnapore. The invasion was

uniformly successful. The main body marched by the Chilka Lake to Puri, which was occupied without opposition. The Marathas made a stand near Pipli, but were driven back in rout, and the fort (Barahbatı) at Cuttack was stormed with little loss. Equal success attended the expedition against Balasore, where the Maratha fort was captured after a feeble resistance. The march of the column from Jaleswar was a triumphal progress. According to a despatch from Wellesley, "the inhabitants afforded every assistance to the British troops on their march and expressed the utmost satisfaction in the prospect of being speedily relieved from the oppressions to which they had been uniformly subjected by the Maratha government and of being placed under the protection of the British power."

The principal towns having been occupied, three Rajas, Kujang, Kanika and Harispur, who were inclined to dispute the British authority, were promptly reduced to submission, and their forts dismantled. Part of the forces was sent inland to clear out the Marathas from the Garhjats, as the Orissa States were called. The enemy made a stand at the Barmul pass in Daspalla, which was

regarded as the key to the Central Provinces, but this was quickly forced. The Marathas fled in confusion and the chiefs of the Garh-jats hastened to make their submission. In December 1803 the Bhonsla Raja of Nagpur against whom General Arthur Wellesley (afterwards the Duke of Wellington) had gained the brilliant victories of Assaye and Argaon concluded the treaty of Deogaon by which Orissa was ceded to the British.

**The rising of 1804** — Next year when the majority of the British troops had been withdrawn to Madras and only a small garrison was left at Cuttack the Raja of Khurda rose in rebellion. This Raja who had a hereditary connection with the temple of Jagannath at Puri had enjoyed the position of a semi-independent chief. The Marathas had taken possession of his territory to which the British in their turn succeeded. Disappointed in his hopes of getting it restored he seized the opportunity afforded by the withdrawal of the British troops to attempt its recovery by force. Troops were hurried up from Ganjam and the rebels driven back to the Raja's fortress at Khurda. The work of the campaign was so slow that it was three weeks

before they could be stormed. With the loss of his stronghold the Raja realized that the struggle was hopeless and surrendered. His territory was confiscated and formed into a Government estate—the present Khurda *khas mahal*. He himself was a State prisoner for three years, after which he was installed by Government as Superintendent of the Jagannath temple at Puri—a position which he lost when the Paik rebellion of 1817 broke out and he was again made a State prisoner.

**Renditions to the Marathas.**—Wellesley having been recalled (1805), his policy was reversed. The view which was held by the home authorities was, in the words of Cornwallis, who shared it, that “It is physically impossible for Great Britain to maintain so vast and unwieldy an empire as India, which annually calls for reinforcements of men and remittances of money, and which yields little other profit except brilliant gazettes.” So far, therefore, from extending the Company’s dominion, it was reduced by giving back to the Marathas in 1805 some of the ceded territory, which being adjacent to or intermixed with their possessions, might involve the Company in frontier disputes and possible



wars. The State of Sambalpur with its dependent States was accordingly withdrawn from the British protectorate and restored to the Bhonsla Raja of Nagpur in consideration it was said of the great loss to which he had been subjected by the transfer of the tribute and allegiance of the chiefs to the British Government. There was no consideration for the welfare and wishes of the chiefs and their subjects. The Raja and people of Sambalpur knowing the fate which awaited them under their former masters first vigorously protested against the surrender and then resisted it. The Marathas appealed to the British for help in establishing themselves but eventually succeeded in gaining possession by an act of treachery. Having lulled the people into a false sense of security by a solemn engagement to leave the country in independence provided tribute was paid they made a surprise attack on the fort of Sambalpur. The old regime of plunder and extortion was re-established by Raghuji Bhonsla Raja of Nagpur whose exactions earned for him the soubriquet of the big Luvya.

Relief from oppression came in 1817 on the outbreak of the last Maratha war when

the Marathas made it a condition of the surrender of the fort at Sambalpur that British sepoy's should escort them beyond the borders of the State and protect them from the attacks of their late subjects. The Raja of Sambalpur, whom the Marathas had kept as a prisoner, was restored, and the State was finally ceded to the British by treaty together with the States of Patna, Gangpur and Bonai.

**The rule of the Marathas.**—During the half century of Maratha rule the fabric of civil administration built up by the Mughals was practically destroyed. The government of the Marathas was, in effect, an organization of licensed plunder. They treated Orissa simply as a source of gain and it was given over to spoliation. "It is the custom of the Mahratta troops," wrote Motte when he travelled through Orissa in 1766, "to plunder as much in the zamindaris tributary to them as in any enemy's country." The only places exempt from their raids were those held by a Maratha Faujdar or military commandant, for he obtained "an order to be exempted from pillage, the execution of which he attends to himself." Exactions were enforced by

barbarous torture The victims had nails thrust between the finger nails and the flesh men were smeared with sugar tied to stakes and exposed to the attacks of ants or they were tied to the heels of horses, which were whipped into a gallop Poverty was the only protection against opression Cultivation consequently languished for the peasants would only grow sufficient rice to feed themselves till the next harvest

free of revenue, within three years 100,000 documents often forged, had been filed to support such claims

The revenue history of the first years of British rule has been described as an unfortunate record of assessment on insufficient inquiry and of the enforcement of inelastic rules for the realization of inequitable revenues. A permanent settlement was not made and hence the revenue system of Orissa differs from that in force in Bengal and Bihar, the land revenue being fixed only for a term of years and liable to adjustment at its close. Otherwise, however, the rigid provisions of the Bengal regulations were introduced with disastrous results. The assessment, made in ignorance of the real assets and largely on the reports of interested subordinates, was excessive. No allowance was made for losses due to floods and droughts, and the zamindars, as in Bengal, had to pay the revenue in full. Some left their estates to be managed by the Collector, and he in turn attempted direct management through agents, who embezzled, or farmed them out to lessees, who rack-rented the ryots. Defaulting estates were put up for sale in distant Calcutta, an arrangement which was

the ruin of many old Oriya families for they were knocked down at low prices to Bengali speculators, who proved oppressive land lords. There were also other grievances such as a heavy salt tax the extortions of corrupt underlings to whom the collection of revenue was entrusted the oppression of a venal police and the necessity for paying the revenue in rupees instead of in the old currency of cowries.

**The Paik rebellion**—In 1817 a rebellion broke out which is known as the Paik rebellion. The Paiks were a kind of militia whose duty it was to defend the country against invasion and enforce law and order in time of peace. They had a barbaric war dress—chain armour over which was a tiger or leopard skin with a girdle formed of the tail of some wild animal. To add to the ferocity of their appearance and in pure fear in their enemies they put on a kind of war paint smearing their limbs yellow and their faces red. According to an account written in 1820 they combined with the most profound barbarism and the blindest devotion to the will of their chiefs a ferocity and unquietness

of disposition, which ever rendered them an important and formidable class ”

After the rising of 1804 the lands which they held in return for the performance of military and police duties were resumed by Government. The loss of lands which they had held for generations and regarded as hereditary was bitterly resented as an injustice. Only a leader and an occasion were needed for a revolt. The leader was found in a man called Jagabandhu, who had commanded the forces of the Raja of Khurda when he was a recognized chief. He, too, was brooding over his wrongs, for he had been dispossessed of his estate, which had been settled with a Bengali. The occasion came when a body of Khonds crossed over from the State of Gumsur and raised the flag of revolt. The Paiks rose to a man and joined them under Jagabandhu. For a time they carried all before them, overrunning the country in bodies several thousands strong and leaving a trail of rapine and arson. Jagabandhu issued orders in the name of the Raja of Khurda, whose retainers joined the rebels. The priests at Puri proclaimed that the British rule was ended and that of the ancient Hindu kings restored. Puri itself had to be abandoned

by the officials who took refuge in Cuttack, and all communication between the latter place and the south of Orissa was cut off

As soon as troops could take the field the rebellion collapsed the Paiks being unable to make a stand against disciplined soldiers. Puri was retaken and the Raja again made a State prisoner. It took some time to hunt down scattered bands of marauders which continued to infest the jungles of Khurda but tranquillity was restored by 1810 when a general amnesty was proclaimed.

the mistakes of their predecessors, the Settlement Officers laboured to overcome every difficulty that stood in the way of a fair settlement. Their reward was the contentment of the people and their confidence in its justice. This settlement ran from 1837 to 1867 and was then prolonged for another thirty years in consequence of the famine of 1866 which left Orissa with a reduced population and exhausted resources.



## CHAPTER XII

1813 to 1835

**The Charter Act of 1813** —The position of the East India Company was materially altered by the Charter Act of 1813 which renewed the charter for another twenty years but put an end to the Company's trade monopoly except as regards tea and the trade with China. The shackles of the monopoly being struck off the trade and wealth of the country developed rapidly. The Company found more advantage in its general prosperity than in the profits of an exclusive trade. Hence forth the officers of the Company less preoccupied by commercial duties paid increasing attention to good administration. The Company still continued commercial operations but organized rule for the benefit of India was recognized as its chief function. This principle had indeed been affirmed by the House of Commons which in a debate on a series of resolutions embodying the main provisions of the Charter Act declared that it was the duty of the country to promote

the interest and happiness of the native inhabitants of the British dominions in India, and such measures ought to be adopted as may tend to the introduction among them of useful knowledge and of religious and moral improvement ”

**The administration of the Marquess of Hastings.**—In 1812 Lord Minto's failing health led him to tender his resignation with effect from January 1814. In England a new ministry was in office under Lord Liverpool and in a hurry to exercise its power of patronage. It accordingly recalled Minto and appointed in his place Lord Moira, better known by his subsequent title of the Marquess of Hastings. The new Governor-General had had a distinguished military career and was so far a power in political life that the Prince Regent (afterwards George IV) entrusted him in 1812 with negotiations for forming a new ministry. He was a personal friend of the Prince, who used to say—  
 “ Moira and I are like two brothers. When one wants money, he puts his hand in the other's pocket ” The Prince at any rate did so, and Hastings had had to sell some of his estates to keep the Prince in funds.

The administration of Hastings, which was of unusual length (1813-23) is chiefly memorable for the wars with the Nepalese Pindaris and the Marathas, the last of which left only Sind and the Punjab outside the sphere of British protection. The Nepalese war is described in Chapter XXI. The war against the Marathas as stated in the last chapter led to the resumption of Sambalpur and its dependent States. The Pindari war did not affect Bengal, Bihar and Orissa but in 1816 Orissa was threatened with an invasion by the Pindaris who after devastating Ganjam moved along the border. The danger was averted by British troops which drove the Pindaris back. Its imminence combined with the ravages and fiendish atrocities committed in Ganjam and the territories of the Nizam finally decided the Government to undertake the suppression of the Pindaris.

From a provincial point of view the salient features of Hastings' administration were the Puk rebellion in Orissa described in the last chapter, the abolition of the proprietaryship, the advance of education and the improvement of Calcutta. The administrative changes were few. The complete separation of judicial and executive functions

introduced by Cornwallis was abandoned and Collectors were given jurisdiction in criminal cases. The number, emoluments and powers of the subordinate Indian officers trying civil cases were increased, a higher grade called Sadr Amins being created in addition to the Amins and Munsifs. These measures were necessitated by the paucity of judges and the consequent accumulation of unheard cases, which was so great as to amount to a denial of justice to litigants. By 1827 over nine-tenths of the original suits were decided by Indian officers.

Hastings himself had long views and declared—"A time not very remote will arrive when England will, on sound principles of policy, wish to relinquish the domination which she has gradually and unintentionally assumed over this country and from which she cannot at present recede. In that hour it would be the proudest boast and most delightful reflection that she had used her sovereignty towards enlightening her temporary subjects, so as to enable the native communities to walk alone in the paths of justice and to maintain with probity towards their benefactors that commercial intercourse in which we should then find a solid interest."

**The press censorship**—For some years past the newspapers in Calcutta had been subject to a Government censorship. No newspaper could be printed without previous inspection by a Government officer on pain of deportation. The censorship had been extended by Minto's Government in 1813 so as to cover not only newspapers but also notices, hand bills and all ephemeral publications. Even the titles of books had to be submitted to the Chief Secretary, who could require the books themselves to be sent for examination. The penalty of deportation had never been enforced and in 1818 Hastings abolished the censorship as unnecessary. 'It is salutary,' he said, 'for supreme authority even when its intentions are most pure to look to the control of public scrutiny. While conscious of rectitude that authority can lose nothing of its strength by exposure to general comment.'

As a matter of fact the opportunity for general comment continued to be strictly limited and there was no real freedom of the press. Editors of newspapers were still prohibited from animadverting on any measures of the Directors and other public authorities in England which affected the

Government of India, from comments on the political transactions of the local administration; and from discussions tending to create alarm or suspicion of interference with the religious opinions of the Indian population—a provision obviously aimed at the missionaries. They were even forbidden to publish any private scandal or personal remarks tending to excite dissension in society.

After the resignation of Hastings the attitude of suspicion and restraint was resumed by Government. A Regulation was passed in 1823, when Mr Adam was acting Governor-General, which placed the press under Government control by prohibiting the printing of any book or newspaper and the possession or use of a printing press, without a license from Government which was free to grant or refuse licenses at its discretion. Mr Adam also deported Mr Buckingham, editor of the *Calcutta Journal*, who had committed the trifling offence of publishing a paragraph ridiculing the appointment of a Scottish chaplain as clerk to the committee of stationery.

The first Bengali newspaper, a weekly journal called the *Samachar Darpan* or Mirror of News, was published in 1818 by

the Serampore missionaries and Bishop Heber some years later noted that the Bengali papers canvassed politics, their views tending towards Whiggism

**Emancipation of the Press**—The Press Regulation of 1823 was not enforced either by Lord Amherst or by Lord William Bentinck and it was abolished in 1835 while Sir Charles (afterwards Lord) Metcalfe was acting as Governor General. The emancipation of the press was not regarded without misgiving as it was feared that the Bengali newspapers would abuse their freedom. Even so liberal a statesman as Mounstuart Elphinstone felt the danger. If all be free, we shall be in a predicament such as no State has yet experienced. In other countries the use of the press has gradually extended along with the improvement of the government and the intelligence of the people but we shall have to contend at once with the most refined theories of Europe and with the prejudices and fanaticism of Asia both rendered doubly formidable by the imperfect education of those to whom every appeal will be addressed.

Metcalfe however held that "the press ought to be free if consistently with the safety of the State it could be. Moreover, it was

already practically free, for the existing restrictions were not enforced and Government had no intention of enforcing them. All that was now required was the registration of the printer. In Calcutta the popularity of the measure was at once apparent. The public evinced its gratitude to Metcalfe by erecting a building for literary purposes, called the Metcalfe Hall, which is now the Imperial Library. The Directors, however, marked their disapproval of Metcalfe's action a few years later by refusing to appoint him Governor of Madras, whereupon Metcalfe resigned the service.

**Improvement of Calcutta.**—Large improvement schemes were carried out at this time in Calcutta by a Lottery Committee formed in 1817, which expended ten per cent of the funds raised by lotteries, that of 1822 fetched Rs 6 lakhs at an auction. The Lottery Committee came to an end in 1836 as public opinion in England condemned this means of providing funds for public purposes, in the twenty years it was at work, it transformed a great part of Calcutta. A census of the inhabitants was made in 1822 (on the basis of returns made by the assessors of



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trives) and the result was to show a population of 180,000—a fifth of that returned in 1921. Then, as now, there was a large daily influx from Howrah and the suburbs, which was estimated at 100,000. Next year the first steamer appeared on the Hooghly and was used to bring up the river ocean passengers who previously came up it in country boats. The first steamer to make the voyage from England to Calcutta was the *Enterprise*, which arrived at the end of 1825, using sails as well as steam.

**Cholera epidemic in 1817** —The year 1817 was marked by the outbreak of a virulent epidemic of cholera which spread from Bengal through the greater part of India, penetrated through Persia into Russia and thence went over Europe and even reached America. Jessore is said to have been the nidus of this epidemic but the first reported case appeared in Calcutta and it raged in various parts of Bengal. Spreading up the Gangetic valley it attacked the army then engaged in the Maratha war and forced it to suspend operations for a time. It must not be supposed that this was the first appearance of cholera. On the contrary it had long been endemic in Bengal where its ravages

were extensive in 1762, but it does not appear to have prevailed previously in such a virulently epidemic form.

### **Amherst's administration (1823-28).—**

On the resignation of Hastings, the post of Governor-General was offered to, and accepted by, George Canning, who, after he had made all preparations to go to India, canceled his acceptance in order to take up the post of Foreign Secretary, from which he passed to the position of Prime Minister. The choice of the Ministry then fell on Lord Amherst, whose administration is chiefly notable for the first Burmese war (1824-26) described in Chapter XXI. This ended in the annexation of Assam, Arakan and Tenasserim, of which the first two were attached to Bengal.

**Cession of Chinsura.**—In 1825 the Dutch settlement of Chinsura was made over to the British in accordance with a treaty concluded in the previous year. The Dutch had long had a precarious tenure owing to European wars. The town was occupied by the British in 1781, but handed back in 1783. It was again taken in 1795, after Holland became an appanage of the French Republic and remained under British administration.

until 1817 when it was again restored. It had by this time lost all semblance of its former prosperity. Its maritime trade had disappeared and to a visitor in 1827 it appeared a city of silence and decay the Dutch quarter in particular exhibiting "pictures of ruin and melancholy beyond anything you can imagine."

**Lord William Bentinck** — After a brief interlude in which a Bengal civilian Mr. Butterworth Bayley acted as Governor General the office was assumed by Lord William Bentinck. He had already had Indian experience having been Governor of Madras from 1803 to 1807 when he was recalled in consequence of the Vellore mutiny for which he appears to have been made a scape-goat. The period of his administration (1828—35) was an important epoch in the history of British rule. During it the Charter Act of 1833 establishing liberal principles of government was passed while a number of reforms were introduced in India. English education was adopted (*vide* Chapter XXVI) and Persian ceased to be the language of the law courts (1837). The land had peace except for a rising (1831—32) in Chota

Nagpur described in Chapter XXII and a small Muhammādan outbreak in 1831 (*vide* Chapter XXIII)

The "wise reforming and paternal administration" of Lord William Bentinck is worthily commemorated by the inscription (drafted by Macaulay) on his statue in Calcutta. It states that his "constant study was to elevate the intellectual and moral character of the nations committed to his charge" that he "infused into Oriental despotism the spirit of British freedom, never forgot that the end of government is the welfare of the governed; abolished cruel rites; effaced humiliating distinctions, gave liberty to the expression of public opinion"

As is often the case with inscriptions and obituary notices, this panegyric is liable to the criticism that its subject is spoken of as if he alone was responsible for the achievements of his time. The work and influence of other high-principled administrators should not be overlooked, such as Sir Thomas Munro, Governor of Madras from 1820 to 1827, Mountstuart Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay from 1819 to 1827, Sir John Malcolm, Governor of Bombay from 1827 to 1830, and

Sir Charles Metcalfe who was Member of Council from 1827 to 1830—all men of high ideals who made the good of the governed their guiding principle. It has well been said that Bentinck represented the liberal and humanitarian spirit of the new age in Europe that without making a change of policy he brought out the doctrine implicit in the theory and practice of his predecessors that the object of British Government in India was to promote the welfare of the people of India.

**The abolition of suttee**—The practice of suttee (*sati*) i.e. the burning (or rarely, burying) alive of Hindu widows with their husbands had been discouraged by Akbar who allowed it to take place only when the widow gave her consent. It had been prohibited by Jahangir in 1620 under penalty of death to those who took part in the rite. In no part of India was it so common as in Bengal. In the 10 years ending in 1828 the number of women who committed suttee in the division of Calcutta alone averaged 350 a year but there is good reason to doubt the completeness of the returns for when the Serampore missionaries in 1804 made a census of suttees performed within a circle of 30 miles round

Calcutta, they found that the aggregate in six months only was over 300

Immolation was not confined to single cases. In 1812 nine widows immolated themselves on the funeral pyre of the Raja of Kanika in Orissa. In 1775, an ancestor of the Hathwa Raj having been killed and beheaded by a turbulent cousin, his widow was burnt to death, holding her husband's head in her lap, with thirteen women of the household. The practice was not confined to any particular class of the Hindus, and occasionally took place among Muham-madans. Buchanan-Hamilton mentions the case of the widow of a Muhammadan weaver being buried alive with her husband; and Lord Minto remarked in 1807—"The odd thing is that it prevails in the lowest condition of life. When a poor miserable peasant's wife happens to be of a good caste, which is often the case, nothing in the world will prevent her from burning from pure gentility." Suttee had all the sanction of popular approval among the Hindus, as may be realized from the account given by Lady Amherst in 1825 of the ghastly fate of a widow near Calcutta, who shrunk from immolation. "When the flame reached her, she lost courage, and amid a volume of



smoke she contrived to slip down unperceived and gained a neighbouring jungle. At first she was not missed but when the smoke subsided it was discovered she was not on the pile. The mob became furious and ran into the jungle to look for the unfortunate young creature dragged her down to the river put her into a dingy and shoved off to the middle of the stream where they forced her violently overboard and she sunk to rise no more.

Government did not attempt to put a stop to suttees beyond requiring that a license must be obtained from a Magistrate which was to be granted only if the widow gave her voluntary consent was not under 16 years of age and was not in a state of pregnancy these restrictions were imposed in 1813. A conviction was however growing among the more enlightened that the practice was inhuman and should be stopped by Government. The Serampore missionaries first moved in the matter in 1804 when Carey consulted pandits who advised that suttee was merely a virtue and not a duty. His friend Uday a Member of Council laid the results of Carey's inquiries before Wellesley who had no time to take up the question as he was within a week of leaving down office. Raja Ram Mohan Rai

began 'to denounce the practice' in 1818 and found supporters among enlightened Hindus like Dwarka Nāth Tagore, but 'was bitterly opposed by the orthodox school under Raja Radha Kānta Deb. So fierce were the feelings aroused that for a time Rām Mohan Rai went about in danger of his life and had to be protected by a guard.

In 1824 the Directors went so far as to express the opinion that it was practicable or at least safe, to abolish suttee, but they would not take the responsibility of ordering its abolition. Neither would Lord Amherst, who feared the storm such an interference with a religious custom might arouse among the Hindus. He looked to the diffusion of education for a remedy and did not believe it possible that the practice would long survive "the advancement which every year brings with it in useful and rational learning. Except on the occurrence of some very general sickness, the progress of general instruction and the unostentatious exertion of our local officers will produce the happy effect of a gradual diminution and at no very distant period, the final extinction of the barbarous rite of suttee." He was not singular in this

view Even Ram Mohan Rai warm advocate as he was of abolition feared the effect of Government orders He told Lord William Bentinck that any public enactment would give rise to fears that Government was abandoning the principle of religious toleration and would proceed to force Christianity on the people It was his opinion that the practice might be suppressed quietly by increasing the difficulties and by the indirect agency of the police

It is to the credit of Lord William Bentinck that within a year of assuming office he took up and settled this controversial question by a Regulation (1820) which declared that the practice of suttee or burning or burying alive the widows of Hindus was revolting to the feelings of human nature and nowhere enjoined by the religion of the people as an imperative duty It made all persons convicted of aiding or abetting in the sacrifice of a Hindu widow whether the sacrifice was voluntary on her part or not guilty of culpable homicide

In taking this measure Bentinck refused to rely on the argument that suttee was not essentially a part of the Hindu religion

though the argument was perfectly valid, for the text in the Rig-veda said to sanction it was, according to Max Muller, “mangled, mistranslated and misapplied” To adopt such a line, he held, would only evade the real difficulties He had no doubt that every order of Hindus, with few exceptions, conscientiously regarded suttee as sacred “The question is not what the rite is but what it is supposed to be”—words which modern administrators would do well to study and digest He took higher ground, *viz*, that abolition would be to the benefit of the Hindus themselves “When they shall have been convinced of the error of this first and most criminal of their customs, may it not be hoped that others, which stand in the way of their improvement, may likewise pass away, and that thus emancipated from those chains and shackles upon their minds and actions, they may no longer continue, as they have done, the slaves of every foreign conqueror, but that they may assume their first places among the great families of mankind?”

Opposition to the measure came from Bengal alone In Calcutta a body of orthodox Hindus formed a society for the restoration of suttee Petitions were presented

against the obnoxious Regulation and when these proved unavailing an appeal was preferred to the Privy Council as a test case. Counter petitions were prepared by the reforming Hindus and presented by Ram Mohan Rai to the Houses of Parliament. The appeal was finally rejected by the Privy Council in 1832.

Rare cases of suttee still occur two took place in the Gava district in 1901 and 1903. Even now the feeling in favour of self immolation for religious motives so far persists that Hindu widows in Bengal occasionally commit suicide on the death of their husbands by soaking their clothes with kerosene oil and setting them on fire. Such suicides are acclaimed even in Bengali newspapers as being in accordance with the best traditions of Hindu womanhood. There is, therefore reason to apprehend that if the penal sanction was either removed or not enforced suttee might be revived.

**The suppression of thuggee**—The sustained and systematic measures taken for the suppression of thuggee were due to the growing energy and efficiency of the administration rather than to any personal influence of

Lord William Bentinck. The thugs were a fraternity of murderers, whose crimes had a veneer of religion, the name thug (*thag*) means literally a cheat and was apparently due to the disguises of the thugs and the way in which they deceived their victims with an assumption of good fellowship until the time came for their despatch. Whether Hindus or Muhammadans, the object of their veneration was the goddess Bhawani or Kali, whom they propitiated before an expedition and to whom they consecrated the implements of their murderous profession. Colonel Sleeman, to whose efforts and ability their suppression was chiefly due, tells us—"There is not among them one who doubts the divine origin of the system of thuggee, not one who doubts that he and all who have followed the trade of murder, with the prescribed rites and observances, were acting under the immediate orders and auspices of the goddess Devi, Kali, Durga or Bhawani, as she is indifferently called. A thug considers the persons murdered precisely in the light of victims offered up to the goddess." Kali delights in the blood of victims, but the thugs were careful not to shed any, for fear of detection. Their favourite method of

killing was strangulation with a strip of cloth which they called a *rumal* or handkerchief both this and the mattock (*kodali*) used for burying victims were dedicated to Kali. There was a rite of initiation in which the neophyte partook of a confection of molasses (*gur*) which was credited with extraordinary properties. The *gur*, said one thug changes our nature. It would change the nature of a horse. Let any man once taste of that *gur*, and he will be a thug though he know all the trades and have all the wealth in the world.

Only one part of India was free from the thugs viz the Konkan in Bombay. "The annually returning tide of murder," said Sleeman swept unsparingly over the whole face of India from the Sutlej to the sea coast and from the Himalaya to Cape Comorin." Between 1826 and 1835 altogether 1502 thugs were put on trial of whom 1400 were convicted and they were proved to have murdered 94700 persons one man confessing to over 900 murders. One reason for these large figures was that the thugs allowed no witness to their crimes to escape and in order to murder one man would wait till they could make sure of his whole party.

In the river districts of Bengal the river thug took the place of the road thug. According to Sir Joseph Hooker (1854), "two hundred and fifty boats full of river thugs, in crews of fifteen, infested the Ganges between Benares and Calcutta during five months of every year under pretence of conveying pilgrims. Travellers along the banks were tracked and offered a passage, which if refused in the first boat, was probably accepted in some other. At a given signal the crew rushed in, doubled up the decoyed victim, broke his back and threw him into the river, where floating corpses are too numerous to elicit even an exclamation." A report on river thuggee further states "This horrid crime was fostered by nearly all classes of the community—the landholders, the native officers of our courts, the police, the village authorities." Both the regular and village police, it declared, were often themselves thugs.

A special Thuggee Department was organized in 1830, Colonel Sleeman being appointed general superintendent of the operations in 1835. In 1836 an Act was passed by which any one convicted of being



or having been a member of a gang of thugs was liable to imprisonment for life. The thugs were gradually tracked down by means of informers and this hideous form of crime extirpated.

**Continuance of dacoity** — In spite however of the efforts of the officers of Government dacoity the endemic crime of Bengal was not extirpated. It was rife on the rivers where it was to all intents and purposes piracy. A band of river pirates actually attacked and looted the town of Serampore in 1823 though not without loss and Purnea was infested by bands of dacoits with whom the landed middlemen called *mustajirs* were in league. leases of estates were indeed taken simply in the hope of a share in the plunder of dacoits. Though not extinguished much was done to check this form of brigandage. Between 1830 and 1836 several dangerous gangs were broken up by the Thuggee and Dacoity Department. To continue the account of the measures against dacoity a special Act was passed in 1843 on the analogy of the Thuggee Act making any one convicted of being or having been a member of a gang of dacoits liable to transportation.

for life without proof of the actual commission of dacoity. In 1852 a special Commissioner for the suppression of dacoity was appointed, and in 1858 a board was formed of itinerant Magistrates, called the Dacoity Commissioners, who moved about the country dealing out summary justice. They were abolished in 1860, as it was hoped that the newly formed police force would be able to stamp out the evil.

**Administrative reforms.**—Some important changes were made in the system of government during Bentinck's administration. The provincial Courts of Appeal and Circuit were abolished. The preference of officers for executive work had made these courts "resting places for those members of the service who were deemed unfit for higher responsibilities." In 1829 Commissioners were appointed, each in charge of four or five districts, who in addition to revenue work went on circuit as Sessions Judges. After a few years the sessions work was transferred to the civil judges, while in 1831 the magisterial work of the latter was made over to the Collector, thus creating the modern system of district administration.

under the Civil and Sessions Judge and the Magistrate Collector

Another reform was the fuller employment of Indians in the work of administration more especially by the creation in 1831 of a higher grade of Indian civil judges called Principal Sadr Amins and by throwing open the office of Deputy Collector to Indians in 1833. It was not till 1843 that in order to strengthen the criminal branch of judicial administration an Act was passed authorizing the appointment of uncovenanted Deputy Magistrates who have since become the backbone of district administration. These measures were partly due to the recognition of the wisdom of giving the people of India a fuller share in the government of their country and partly to financial reasons for the staff of Europeans was found to be too small to cope with the growing volume of work and the expense of an exclusively European service would have been impossible.

The Charter Act of 1833 — a great advance is marked by the Charter Act of 1833 which is a milestone in the history of

British rule in India It renewed the Company's charter for another 20 years but changed the Company's character by forbidding it to engage in trade Henceforth it ceased to be a trading corporation Government was to be its only concern—a change which was of immense advantage to the administration The expansion of the British dominions was formally recognized by converting the title of the Governor-General of Fort William in Bengal to that of Governor-General of India This was followed in 1836 by a partition of the overgrown Bengal Presidency into two, *viz*, Bengal and Agra, the latter being placed under a Lieutenant-Governor Free ingress into India, without the irritating restriction of a license, was at the same time granted to all European British subjects New principles were enunciated by the Committee of Parliament which reviewed the administration of India before the Act was drafted It declared in its report—

(1) “ It is recognized as an indisputable principle that the interests of the native subjects are to be consulted in preference to those of Europeans whenever the two come in competition, and therefore the laws ought to be

adapted to the feelings and habits of the natives rather than to those of Europeans

(2) At present natives are only employed in subordinate positions in the revenue judicial and military departments They are said to be alive to the grievance of being excluded from a larger share in the executive government It is amply borne out by the evidence that such exclusion is not warranted on the score of incapacity for business or the want of application or trustworthiness while it is contended that their admission under European control into the higher offices would strengthen their attachment to British dominion would conduce to a better administration of justice and would be productive of a great saving in the expenses of the Indian Government

The Committee's views found expression in the Act which specifically laid down that no native of the British territories in India nor any natural born subject of His Majesty resident therein should by reason only of his religion, place of birth descent colour or any of them be disabled from holding any place office or employment under the Company These statutory provisions were repeated in a

more positive form in the proclamation issued by Queen Victoria in 1858 on the assumption of direct government by the Crown

The Directors promptly issued instructions to give practical effect to them. They pointed out that the meaning of the Act was that "there shall be no governing casæ in British India", that Indians should be admitted to places of trust as freely and extensively as a regard for the due discharge of the functions attached to such places would permit. Fitness, in fact, was henceforth to be the criterion of eligibility. Further, steps were to be taken to make the people of India qualified to meet European competitors by promoting every design tending to their improvement, whether by conferring on them the advantages of education or by diffusing among them the treasures of science, knowledge and moral culture.

far as Bengal Bihar and Orissa are concerned for the advance of education, the withdrawal of Government from the management of the Jagannath temple at Puri and the abolition of the tax hitherto imposed on pilgrims (1840) The association of Government with Hindu worship had long been the subject of criticism as tantamount to a State sanction of idolatry Both Lord Auckland and Lord Ellenborough (1842—44) were pre-occupied with military affairs but during the latter's administration the policy of associating Indians with the executive government was advanced a step further by the appointment of Deputy Magistrates already referred to and some steps were also taken to put down slavery

**Slavery** —Slavery was a long established institution when British rule began, and received State sanction by a Regulation passed in 1772 which condemned the families of convicted dacoits to be sold as slaves The Committee of Circuit which proposed this penalty justified it by reasons which throw light on the condition of servitude in India 'The ideas of slavery borrowed from our American colonies will make every modification of it

appear, in the eyes of our countrymen in England, a horrible evil But it is far otherwise in this country, here slaves are treated as the children of the families to which they belong and often acquire a much happier state by their slavery than they could have hoped for by the enjoyment of liberty '' The prevalence of slavery in Calcutta itself may be gathered from the remarks made in 1785 by Sir William Jones Chief Judge of the Supreme Court—" Hardly a man or woman exists in a corner of this populous town who hath not at least one slave child, either purchased at a trifling price or saved for a life that seldom fails of being miserable Many of you, I presume, have seen large boats filled with such children coming down the river for open sale at Calcutta Nor can you be ignorant that most of them were stolen from their parents or bought, perhaps for a measure of rice, in time of scarcity ''

Slavery or serfdom was also common in the interior, Nowhere does it appear to have been so universal as in the island of Sandwip off the coast of Noakhali According to a report of 1789 there was hardly a householder, however otherwise indigent, who had



not at least one slave and the majority had several. One of the principal men had over 1 500. The abundance of slaves was attributed to the richness of the crops produced on the island for they attracted people from the neighbouring districts in times of scarcity when it was common for them to sell themselves and their posterity for a bare maintenance.

The first anti slavery measure was passed in 1811 when the importation of slaves from foreign countries was prohibited. In 1835 the purchase and sale of slaves brought from one district to another was made a penal offence and this was followed up in 1848 by removing claims to slaves from the jurisdiction of the civil courts. The slave trade was finally prohibited by the Indian Penal Code in 1860.

**The decay of indigenous industries** —The East India Company having been debarred from trade by the Charter Act of 1833 began to show a more active concern in the development of Indian trade and manufactures. It was no longer prejudiced by its interests as a trading corporation and in 1840 presented

a memorial to Parliament begging for a removal of the duties which were said to handicap Indian industries. An inquiry held by a Select Committee showed that many indigenous industries had fallen into decline, notably the weaving industry. According to one of the witnesses, Sir Charles Trevelyan, cotton piece-goods from England were already being used by all but the poorest classes in India and the only cotton goods of local manufacture which still held their ground were of the coarsest kind. "The peculiar kind of silky cotton formerly grown in Bengal, from which the fine Dacca muslins used to be made, is hardly ever seen. Dacca, which was the Manchester of India, has fallen off from a very flourishing town to a very poor and small one. The jungle and malaria are fast encroaching upon the town."

The decadence of indigenous industries has been often attributed to the heavy import duties levied in England. That country was till 1846 under a rigid protective system. Tariff duties were levied on about 1,200 articles. These duties had been imposed on an increasing scale from 1797 to 1815, not in order to protect English, much less to

penalize Indian industries but to raise funds for the Napoleonic wars. Their effect on Indian industries especially cotton weaving has been carefully analysed by Mr C J Hamilton in *The Trade Relations between England and India (1600—1896)*, who points out that by the end of the eighteenth century India was beginning to lose her export markets and early in the nineteenth century the producers of the finer cotton goods were being driven even from the home market.

But this was the inevitable result of an unequal fight between the handicraftsman and the machine product. The high English import duties were neither directed against the Indian cotton manufacturers nor did they play any really important part in determining the outcome.

Even before the imposition of the high war duties the cotton weaving industry had begun to decline. The Company's Resident at Dacca reporting in 1795 put the beginning of the decline in 1754 and the war duties commenced in 1797. By this time the power loom had been invented and machinery and factories soon triumphed over the hand industry of Bengal. Every shop according to an

English report of 1793, offered British muslins equal in appearance and of more elegant patterns than Indian at one-fourth of the price. The French also entered into competition. A report on the external commerce of Bengal for 1804-05 declared "We should not be so sanguine as to expect that the demand for the piece-goods of India can ever be so great as formerly, since numerous and extensive factories have been recently established in the interior of France as well as in England. The weavers have there succeeded in imitating, with so much exactness the fabrics of Bengal, particularly our coarse and middling assortments of muslins, that there is every reason to believe our trade in muslins of this description, whether for the home or foreign markets, must inevitably dwindle to nothing." Within 20 years the hand-weaving industry had succumbed. Writing in 1823 Mr Tucker, a Director of the Company, said that partly as a result of the heavy import duty, but "chiefly from the effect of superior machinery the cotton fabrics which hitherto continued the staple of India have not only been displaced in this country," *i e*, England, "but we actually export our cotton

manufactures to supply a part of the consumption of our Asian possessions. India is thus reduced from the state of a manufacturing country to that of an agricultural country.'

The chief cause of this decline of the indigenous industry was that England had made rapid strides in industrial organization and that the ingenuity of the inventor had revolutionized its manufactures whereas India had stood still. In England spinning machines were invented, steam was applied to machinery, the factory system was established. The hand industry of weaving could not compete against the products of the power loom and the Indian manufacturer could not command either the capital or the organization of the English manufacturer. The days had not yet dawned when Indian industries such as jute, coal and tea were organized on a basis of capitalist production. The indigo and sugar industries however were still flourishing; the sugar produced in Bengal and Bihar not only supplied the needs of northern India but was also exported in large quantities beyond its limits.

**Lord Hardinge's administration (1844—48)** —The administration of Sir Charles

(afterwards Lord) Hardinge is chiefly memorable for the measures taken to suppress human sacrifice and infanticide among the Khonds of Orissa, which are described in Chapter XXII To his Government the people of Bengal were indebted for the reduction of the tax on salt from Rs 3-4-0 to Rs 2-12-0 a maund in 1847, which was followed by a further reduction of four annas two years later

**Cession of Serampore, 1845.**—Serampore, which the Danes had held since 1755, was ceded to the British in 1845 by a treaty concluded with Denmark Like Chinsura and Chandernagore, it had been intermittently in British occupation during the long wars in Europe which followed the establishment of the French Republic Its trade flourished so long as Denmark was neutral, the exports of Bengal being shipped in Danish vessels while British ships were liable to capture by French privateers Owing, moreover, to the jealousy with which the Company maintained its monopoly, private merchants made it their headquarters In 1801 it was taken by the British in consequence of hostilities with Denmark, but was restored next year on the conclusion of the Peace of Amiens It was

reoccupied in 1808 and remained under British administration till 1815 when it was handed back to the Danes by the terms of the Peace of Kiel. After this it was in a decadent state. Its revenue was too small to meet the expenses of its administration. According to Bishop Heber the only force which the Danish Governor could muster for its defence in 1823 when it was attacked by a band of river dacoits consisted of "his dozen sepoy, his silver sticks, policemen and sundry volunteers to the amount of perhaps thirty." Its chief attraction after this was as an asylum for debtors and it declined still further after 1830 when the Danes gave up the right of sheltering debtors.

**Annexation of Angul, 1847-48** — Since 1803 Angul in Orissa had been a feudatory State. Its Raja had long given trouble by attacking his neighbours and oppressing his subjects. A climax was reached when he assisted in rebellions of the Khonds in Gumsur and Brud and became openly defiant. A proclamation was issued at the end of 1847 announcing the annexation of the State and a strong force was sent to occupy it for the Raja commanded levies of 6 000 to 7 000 men.

and his fort was defended by 12 guns. His levies, however, proved a useless rabble and Angul was occupied almost without a blow (1818). The Raja was sent as a State prisoner to Hazaribagh, and Angul was administered by the Superintendent of the Orissa Tributary Mahals till 1891, when it was made a district.

**Lord Dalhousie's administration, 1848—56.**—The period of Lord Dalhousie's administration witnessed a remarkable development, due in large measure to his untiring energy. The modern system of administration began to come into being with the appointment of a Lieutenant-Governor for Bengal (see Chapter XV) and the organization of Government departments. The foundations of material progress were laid by the introduction of the telegraph, the railway and the postal system. A comprehensive educational system was planned and partly completed, of which the main features were vernacular schools throughout the districts, Government colleges of a higher grade and a university. The scheme is described in Chapter XXVI, and here we need only say that the Presidency College, Calcutta, was founded in 1855, and



the University of Calcutta in 1857. There was an outburst of Bengali literature, and the tranquillity of this part of India was broken only by the Santal rebellion of 1855, described in Chapter XXII.

### Admission to the Indian Civil Service —

The last Charter Act of 1853 abolished the system by which the Directors appointed members of the covenanted or Indian Civil Service and threw open admission to it to public competition—whence the name of *Competition wallah* given to future recruits and adopted by Sir George Trevelyan for a book published by him in 1864.

1 The abolition of the system of nomination operated to make a reality of the provision of the Charter Act of 1833 by which Indian as well as British subjects were eligible for all appointments. Hitherto this had been a dead letter as regards higher appointments: the Directors appointing no Indians to the Indian Civil Service. When that service was thrown open to competition they obtained entrance to it. The first to go was Satvendra Nath Tagore son of the Brahmo Samaj leader Maharshi Debendra

Nath Tagore, who in 1862 passed the examination, held in England After him, *longo intervallo*, three Bengalis and one Indian from Bombay passed the examination in 1869: two of these were Mr (afterwards Sir) Surendra Nath Banerjea and Mr Romesh Chandra Dutt, C I E

**Lapse of Sambalpur.**—In 1849 British administration was extended to the State of Sambalpur on the death of its Raja in accordance with Dalhousie's "doctrine of lapse," by which feudatory States were taken over if there was no natural successors to the Chiefs The case of Sambalpur was, however, different from that of other States, for the childless Raja had declined to adopt a son and had expressed a wish that the British should take charge of the State on his death The change was all to the good of the people Sambalpur had long been a prey to misrule, aggravated by internecine struggles for the chieftainship, a grim relic of one of these was seen by a visitor to Sambalpur in 1838—three heads stuck on a pole, their owners having forfeited them for treason The lot of the cultivators, exposed to the raids of both sides, with their accompaniment of arson, torture

and murder has been compared to that of the English settlers in North America struggling to defend their homes against the attacks of Red Indians led at one time by the French and at another by the English

**Other annexations** —The seizure by the Raja of Sikkim of Dr Campbell the Superintendent of Darjeeling and Sir Joseph Hooker while peacefully travelling in Sikkim in 1849 led to the annexation of land which had been granted to the Raja after the Nepalese war the territory annexed now forms part of the district of Darjeeling In 1855 the tract of country in Orissa known as the Khondmals after its inhabitants the Khonds was taken from the State of Band to which it nominally belonged The Khonds themselves did not acknowledge any right of rulership on the part of the Raja of Band, and he himself admitted that he had no power over them The Khondmals formed an asylum for outlaws and it was necessary to establish some authority over a semi savage race

**Organization of Departments** —The administrative machinery was improved by the organization of some Government departments—the beginning of the bureaucratic

system by which different branches of the administration are conducted by expert agencies. The Public Works Department with a staff of engineers under a Chief Engineer was in working order by 1854. Hitherto a Military Board had been responsible for roads and buildings, and its work was designed mainly for military purposes. The necessity for training engineers in India was recognized by the establishment first of a civil engineering college at Rurki and in 1856 of another at Calcutta. The latter, which was at first attached to the Presidency College, was moved in 1880 to the buildings of the Bishop's College at Sibpur and is now known as the Bengal Engineering College. Recruits for the higher appointments were, however, obtained from 1871 to 1906 from the Royal Indian Engineering College at Cooper's Hill near Staines in England.

The Department of Public Instruction, under a Director, was also established in 1855 in place of the Council of Education, which consisted of honorary members, both official and non-official, and the first step was taken towards organizing a Jails Department by the appointment of an Inspector of Prisons.

**The telegraph, post and railway** —Nothing perhaps marks the transition to modern conditions so fully as the introduction of the telegraph the railway and the modern postal system which Dalhousie himself regarded as three great engines of social improvement. The father of the telegraph in India was Dr (afterwards Sir William) O Shaughnessy an Assistant Surgeon, who held the appointment of Professor of Chemistry in the Medical College at Calcutta. He first constructed experimental lines along and across the Hooghly from Calcutta to Diamond Harbour. Mavapur and Kedgeroo telegraph offices were opened in 1851 for business, which was mainly connected with shipping. A line from Calcutta to Agra a distance of 800 miles was made in the remarkably short time of four months and the first message was sent over it in March 1854. The postal system was also inaugurated in 1854 when a uniform rate of postage viz half an anna for a letter weighing a quarter of a tola was fixed irrespective of distance.

The first line of railway was opened in Bombay by the Great Indian Peninsular Railway in 1853 but Bengal was not far behind. The first section of the East Indian Railway

(from Howrah to Hooghly) was opened in 1854 and was extended to Raniganj next year. Further progress was interrupted by the Mutiny, but by 1862 the East Indian Railway had been carried as far as Benares, and the Eastern Bengal Railway was open up to Kushtia Dalhousie, anxious to awaken private enterprise, declined to make the railways a Government concern and offered them to public companies under a guarantee from Government By 1859 eight railway companies had been formed

**Development of material resources.**—The country now began to attract English capital, and this period witnessed the development of the great modern industries of the two provinces—coal, tea and jute

The Raniganj coal-field had been tapped before the close of the eighteenth century, but the industry was still in its infancy A survey was made by Dr Thomas Oldham under Lord Dalhousie's orders, and production began to increase as soon as railway communication was secured, by 1858 the output rose to 220,000 tons The tea industry was not started in Darjeeling till some years after

it had been established in Assam. Experiments were first made by the Superintendent, Dr Campbell in 1841 with seed raised in Kumaon from China stock. By 1856 private enterprise had come into the field, companies had been formed, ten gardens opened and the industry established on a commercial basis.

After 1832 when a Dundee manufacturer's experiments proved the textile value of jute, an export trade had sprung up in the fibre which supplied the jute mills of Dundee. It was not till after 1854 when the Crimean war stopped the European supply of flax and hemp from Russia that the fibre was manufactured in Bengal. In 1855 a mill was started at Rishra (a quarter of the town of Serampore) which has developed into the Wellington Mills and two years later the Barnagore jute mills were established. During the next twenty years mills sprang up on both banks of the Hooghly and the manufacture of jute began to be one of the most important industries of Bengal.

**Literary activity**—This period was also remarkable for an outburst of Bengali literature. Mr. Romesh Chandra Dutt in *The Literature of Bengal* selects the decade 1854

to 1864 as that within which the literary activity of the nineteenth century reached its culminating point " More original work, more substantial and lasting work was done within that decade than either before or after The eminent Vidyasagar inaugurated the great widow-marriage movement and also published his greatest work *Sitar Banabas* Ram Narayan Tarkaratna began and Dina Bandhu Mitra completed the inauguration of the modern Bengali drama Madhu Sudan erected his monumental epic in blank verse and Bankim Chandra founded his new school of fiction All the best works of the best writers, Vidyasagar, Dina Bandhu, Madhu Sudan and Bankim Chandra, were crowded within those ten years "

**Assumption of direct government by the Crown.**—The Mutiny of 1857 (described in the next chapter) created a widespread belief that there was something rotten in the existing system of government, and it was decided that direct government by the Crown should take the place of dual government by Parliament and the Company, represented, respectively, by the Board of Control and the Directors The change was easy to make, for by the



Charter Act of 1853 the Company's charter was not renewed for any definitive term of years but only for such period as Parliament might think fit. Accordingly by an Act passed in 1853 the connection of the East India Company with the administration of India was terminated and the government of the country was transferred to the Crown acting through the Secretary of State for India and the India Council. The change was promulgated by a proclamation announcing in noble language the principles which Queen Victoria would follow. The spirit which infused it was due to the inspiration of the Queen herself who on receiving the original draft of Lord Derby directed that it should be re-drafted so as to breathe feelings of generosity, benevolence and religious toleration and point out the privileges which the Indians will receive in being placed on an equality with the subjects of the British Crown and the prosperity following in the train of civilization. It was laid down that all her subjects of whatever race or creed should be freely and impartially admitted to offices in the different services the duties of which they might be qualified duly to discharge—word since regarded as a political

*magna charta*—and it was announced that it was the Queen's earnest desire to administer the government for the benefit of all her subjects resident in India. "In their prosperity will be our strength, in their contentment our security, and in their gratitude our reward."

### **Character of the Company's rule.—**

Opinions differ as to the merits and demerits of the rule of the East India Company. The views expressed by three contemporaries, viz., an English statesman, an English historian, and a foreign observer, may be quoted as typical of the divergence of opinion. John Bright emphatically denounced the Company and all its works. The Company, he declared, neglected every duty belonging to it except one—the duty of collecting taxes. There was nothing so Christian as the Directors' despatches, nothing so unchristian as their conduct. These extreme statements, made in the House of Commons by a politician speaking to fellow politicians, need not be taken seriously: they are merely the language of political invective. Greater weight attaches to the conclusions of the historian Mill, who, like Balaam, sets out to curse and ends

by blessing. He says that in matters of detail he has had more occasion to blame than to praise the Company and whoever writes history will have the same thankless task to perform. Yet I believe it will be found that the Company during the period of their sovereignty have shown less of a selfish attachment to mischievous powers lodged in their own hands have displayed a more generous welcome to schemes of improvement and are now more willing to adopt improvements not only more than any other sovereigns existing in the same period but than all sovereigns taken together upon the surface of the globe.

In this encomium we may perhaps detect a certain amount of national self glorification and it is well to turn to the balanced judgement of a foreigner. Sismondi

Indian civilization under them to resume its natural progress. Agriculture is flourishing, the arts are cultivated with ease, population and riches begin to increase, intelligence makes some progress, and European opinions engraft themselves naturally and gently on the old ideas of India."

Distinct and different phases can be traced in the attitude of the Company towards India. At first commerce was the supreme interest. This was natural enough. The Company was a commercial concern with obligations to its shareholders. Next, as the Company became a governing corporation, commercial considerations struggled for the control of policy with the idea of the good of the governed. Eventually, the slough of commercialism was cast and the interest of the people held first place. The evolution in the nineteenth century is marked by the Charter Acts of 1813 and 1833, by which Parliament imposed its will on a reluctant Company. Its existence as a governing corporation was in fact prolonged by placing it more and more under State control. After the Charter Act of 1813 deprived the Company of its trade monopoly, the administration began to improve. When

the Company was finally divested of its commercial character in 1833 and became a purely administrative body, a wider view of its duties and responsibilities was taken

It is impossible as Kaye points out in *The Administration of the East India Company*, not to mark a progressive enlargement in the scope of the Directors' views and a progressive improvement in the character of their measures. As early as 1824 Sir Thomas Munro enunciated the principle that— "We should look upon India not as a temporary possession but as one which is to be maintained permanently until the natives shall in some future age have become sufficiently enlightened to frame a regular government for themselves and to conduct and preserve it." This at the time was merely a personal opinion but towards the close of the Company's rule we find Sir Frederick Halliday stating in his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee of 1852— "I believe that our mission in India is to qualify the natives of India for governing themselves. I say also that the measures of the Government for a number of years past have been advisedly directed to so qualifying them without the

slightest reference to any remote consequences upon our administration."

There was so far, however, no attempt to train Indians for the higher branches of Government by admitting them to the covenanted civil service. After the Charter Act of 1833 the Directors had, it is true, declared their desire to have a body of Indians qualified to take a larger share, and to occupy higher appointments in the civil administration, than had hitherto been the case, but they failed to make their words good. Indians, though employed in increasing numbers, did not rise higher than Sub-Judges and Deputy Magistrates. The Company's administration was, in brief, a paternal but beneficent despotism with the higher appointments held by British officers. To those officers is due the affectionate remembrance in which the Company was long held by the people.

In one respect it must be said that the Company was found lacking, *viz*, in its failure to develop the resources of the country. Industrial enterprise was only beginning when the Company's rule was drawing to a close. European capital and direction were

required in the absence of Indian enterprise to organize industries and manufactures, but Europeans were not encouraged. The total number of non-official British born subjects in the whole of India was under 11,000 and the number of those engaged in manufactures could be counted by the hundreds. Nor did the Company do much to open up and improve communications and other works of public utility but in justice to it it must be remembered that its finances were strained by recurring wars such as the Burmese, Sikh, and Afghan wars which left but a small surplus for the internal development of the country. Apart from this one of the greatest drawbacks to the advance of the country in material prosperity was as Lord Dalhousie pointed out 'the total dependence upon the Government in which the community placed itself and its apparent helplessness to do anything for itself.'

**Separation of judicial and executive functions** — In 1837 the separation of the offices of Magistrate and Collector was ordered largely because of the additional work entailed by the resumption of revenue free tenures. The change was not a success.

Writing in 1854 Dalhousie strongly condemned it. The Collectors, he said, were of mature standing, highly paid and with very little work. The Magistrates, who were junior officers, were inadequately paid, with very heavy work and without sufficient experience to do that work in such a manner as to command the confidence of the community. The system was injurious to the character of the administration and the interests of the people, and it led to exaggerated and mischievous stories of 'Boy Judges' and idle Collectors "shaking the pagoda tree". The two offices of Magistrate and Collector were eventually separated in 1859.



## CHAPTER XIV

### The Indian Mutiny

In a minute recorded in 1856 Lord Dalhousie wrote 'No prudent man who has any knowledge of eastern affairs would ever venture to predict the maintenance of continued peace within our eastern possessions. Experience frequent hard and recent experience has taught us that war from without or rebellion from within may at any time be raised against us in quarters where they were the least to be expected and by the most feeble and unlikely instruments. No man therefore can prudently hold forth assurance of continued peace in India.' A little over a year after these words were written the Indian Mutiny broke out and proved their truth.

The state of the Bengal army—The Indian Mutiny has been described as not merely a military mutiny but a combination of military grievances, national hatred and religious fanaticism against the English occupiers of India. Whatever its nature it

other parts of the country, it was throughout the greater part of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa a military mutiny and not a rebellion of the people. The sepoy of the Bengal army were easily moved to mutiny, as may be gathered from the account of it given in 1858 by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir Frederick Halliday. "The army mutinied because it was a mercenary army, ill-organized, mis-governed, spoilt, encouraged into the grossest exaggeration of its own supposed power and importance, unwatched, unguarded, unsuspected and, in its material, ignorant, uneducated and superstitious beyond all other classes of our subjects. It was an army more or less mutinous, always on the verge of revolt and certain to have mutinied at one time or another as soon as provocation might combine with opportunity."

It may be objected that Sir Frederick Halliday was only wise after the event, and that in any case his opinion was that of a civilian. But even before the Mutiny some military authorities sounded a note of warning. Sir Charles Napier, Commander-in-Chief in 1894-50, roundly declared that the system of discipline in the Bengal army was bad and complained that many of the old

different regiments stationed in Bengal &c, the modern Bengal Bihar and Orissa, and only 2 400 British troops. The province of Bengal at that time was divided between two divisions of the army the Dinapore division (under General Lloyd) and the Presidency division (under General Hearsey) with headquarters at Dinapore and Barrackpore respectively. One British regiment with a company of artillery was cantoned at Dinapore another regiment at Calcutta and Dum Dum. In the rest of the province with an area of over 150 000 square miles there was not a single British regiment till March 1857 when as stated later one was brought from Rangoon to Chinsura.

To any one acquainted with modern conditions the strength of the military force and the number of garrisons are at first sight surprising. The necessity for a large and widely scattered army lay in a combination of causes viz the absence of communications the need of forces to prevent or repress outbreaks among aboriginal tribes as well as to defend the frontier and lastly the fact that the army had to take the place now filled by the military police. There was no railway except between Howrah and Raniganj roads

fit for the passage of troops were few and far between. There were consequently no speedy means of despatching troops from a central garrison to deal with local outbreaks. With good communications a small striking force in a central situation enables separate units scattered over a large area to be dispensed with. The army moreover was relied upon for the preservation of the peace and the support of the civil authorities in many districts. A force of military police under Captain Rattray had recently been raised, but it consisted only of a small infantry battalion (all Sikhs) and 100 mounted men. This small body was completing its drills at Suri when the mutiny broke out and rendered splendid service throughout it.

The Santals having recently rebelled, a strong force was stationed in the Santal Parganas and its neighbourhood as a measure of security, *viz*, a regiment of native cavalry at Rohini in the Santal Parganas with a detachment at Bhagalpur, and a regiment of native infantry with headquarters at Bausi in the Bhagalpur district and detachments at Deoghar and Rampur Hat. The Ramghar Light Infantry Battalion, which was supposed to be a local corps but was largely composed of

tallow had with a culpable ignorance, been used in the ammunition factories. Steps were quickly taken to prevent the defiling cartridges from reaching the hands and mouths of the sepoys. But no assurances could quiet their perturbed and excited minds

**Other factors** —The new cartridge was not the only disturbing factor. The sepoys had witnessed many changes which made them think that the old order of things was passing away and giving place to a new. Under a recent order of Lord Canning's Government all recruits to the Bengal army had to give an undertaking to serve overseas if required. Those already in the service were exempt from this obligation but resented its being imposed on their friends and relations who joined the ranks. Oudh the home of many of the sepoys had been annexed. The railway and the telegraph were innovations suspected of having a mysterious and sinister object. The issue of the greased cartridges was a culminating factor. Agitators took advantage of the opportunity to play on the feelings of a soldiery equally suspicious and credulous. Muhammadan sepoys were persuaded that the cartridge paper was greased

with pork lard, while Hindu sepoy's believed that the obnoxious grease was made from beef fat. Both classes imagined that Government had insidious designs on their religion—a belief which was not dispelled by the assurances of officers, themselves ignorant of the composition of the cartridge paper, or even by the issue of the new cartridges being stopped. There was, moreover, no general and authoritative pronouncement by Government on the subject until too late.

**Outbreaks at Barrackpore and Berhampore.**—The Mutiny may be said to have broken out on 10th May 1857, when the troops at Meerut rose and marched to Delhi. For some time before this a mutinous spirit had manifested itself at Barrackpore and Berhampore, at the latter of which a regiment had broken into open though very brief mutiny. As early as 11th February General Hearsey declared that at Barrackpore they were living upon a mine ready for explosion. Not only was the loyalty of the sepoy's doubtful, but their Indian officers could not be relied upon. They were, reported Hearsey, afraid of their men and dared not act, all they did was to hold themselves aloof and expect, by so doing, that they would escape censure as not actively

implicated Incendiary fires a sure precursor of trouble began to break out and on the night of the 25th February, sepoy of the 10th Native Infantry at Berhampore their feelings worked upon by a detachment of the 34th Native Infantry which had been sent there from Barrackpore seized their arms and rose in defiance of their officers

Although they had been incited to rise they appear to have had no definite plans and the whole affair was over within a few hours The commanding officer confronted them with a small force of native cavalry and artillery uncertain whether the latter would prove staunch in case of a collision and even if they did whether they would be able to overpower the mutineers who outnumbered them by four to one The mutineers for their part showed no disposition to proceed to extremities They committed no violence but laid down their arms and returned to the lines on the commanding officer withdrawing with his force This outbreak appears to have been an impulsive attempt at protest rather than a deliberate mutiny It served however to bring home to Lord Canning & Government the danger which existed The disbandment of the 10th

Native Infantry was resolved on and a British regiment was hurriedly brought from Rangoon and stationed at Chinsura, so that it might hold in check the sepoy regiments at Barrackpore on the opposite side of the river Hooghly

The disaffected spirit of the sepoys at Barrackpore was manifested not long afterwards. On the 29th March one of the men of the 34th Native Infantry attacked and cut down the adjutant and called on his comrades to rise. The quarter-guard some 30 yards away refused to move a step to seize him. It was left to General Hearsey himself, who happened to come on the scene, to overawe them and advance on the mutineer, who thereupon shot himself though not mortally. Next day, as was afterwards discovered, a deputation of this regiment met the 19th Regiment at Baraset (on its way to Barrackpore to be disbanded) and proposed that it should join the troops there and after seizing Barrackpore and murdering the Europeans, march on Calcutta and sack it. This scheme was rejected by the 19th Regiment, which after the brief *emeute* at Berhampore had shown a chastened spirit. On the 31st March the 19th Regiment was disbanded at Barrackpore, the presence of the regiment



from Chinsura, a wing of another British regiment two British batteries from Dum Dum and the Viceroy's bodyguard from Calcutta being sufficient to prevent any outbreak.

The punishment of the 34th Regiment was considered with leisurely deliberation by Lord Canning's Government and it was eventually disbanded on 6th May. Four days later the Mutiny began with the outbreak at Meerut, which was followed by the seizure of Delhi. No action was taken against the other regiments at Barrackpore till 14th June, when there was an imminent prospect of their rising and they were hurriedly disbanded. That day was known as 'Panic Sunday' in Calcutta where many of the European inhabitants took refuge on the shipping in the river Hooghly in fear that the mutinous troops at Barrackpore would march on the city and that there would be a general rising of the Indian population. The alarm was not unnatural. Then as now there was a large turbulent element in Calcutta composed of men from Northern India with whom violence is a profession and disbanded sepoys had flocked into the

place It was practically defenceless, for the British regiment had been sent to Barrackpore to enable the sepoy to be disarmed, the offer of the Europeans in civil life to form a volunteer corps had at length been accepted by Lord Canning, but only two days previously There were other panics subsequently, which were not confined to the European inhabitants, even as late as February 1858 the Indian artisans and servants were in a state of intense alarm believing that they would be forcibly impressed and sent to Northern India, but Calcutta was never really threatened

There was also fear of a rising among the two regiments left at Berhampore Towards the end of June troops had to be rushed up to prevent an outbreak, some detachments being sent by steamer up the river Bhagirathi and then conveyed by elephants and carriages to Berhampore, while others were sent post-haste from Calcutta in brake-vans drawn by four horses apiece After the mutiny at Dinapore it was felt to be no longer safe to allow these regiments to remain under arms, and they were accordingly disarmed early in August As a further measure of security

the residents of Murshidabad were also disarmed a haul being made of no less than 2 000 small arms and a considerable number of cannon

**Events at Patna and Dinapore** —A much more dangerous storm-centre was Patna, a city with a large Muhammadan population, and a centre of the fanatical sect of Wahabis who made it a focus of intrigue. In the adjoining cantonment at Dinapore there were three sepoy regiments with a battery of artillery and the only force to oppose them or deal with a rebellion in Patna consisted of one weak British regiment and a battery of artillery. Fortunately there was an officer of vigour and decision in the Commissioner William Talver. Knowing of the disaffection existing among the Wahabis and of the danger of mutiny among the sepoys he requisitioned a detachment from Rattray's Sikh battalion for the protection of the city. Early in June a letter was sent by the sepoys at Dinapore to the police at Patna announcing that they would attack Patna and telling them to be ready with the treasure. The interception of the letter threw out their plans and in the nick of time

a body of 250 Sikhs under Rattray marched in

With this force at his back Tayler promptly initiated repressive measures. Four of the Wahabi leaders were made hostages for the good behaviour of their followers the inhabitants of Patna were made to surrender their arms. When on 3rd July a small body of Muhammadans attempted a rising, it was quickly put down by the Sikhs. Inquiry having revealed a wide-spread conspiracy, the ringleaders were arrested, after trial and conviction, some were imprisoned, others executed. Tayler's measures were effective, and he had a coadjutor of the same spirit in Major Holmes, the officer commanding the cavalry at Sugauli in Champaran, who put North Bihar under martial law. Even after the mutiny at Dinapore, when the neighbouring district of Shahabad was in the occupation of the rebels, when the Gaya district was overrun by bands of mutineers and marauding parties roamed over the district of Patna, the city itself remained quiet.

The general in command of the troops at Dinapore was a man of a very different stamp

He had done good service in his day, but he was now old and had lost his vigour. Lord Canning on the principle of trusting the man on the spot had given him discretion to disarm the sepoy. He decided on a weak half measure ordering that the percussion caps should be taken away from the sepoy, but allowing them to retain their muskets. The percussion caps were removed from the magazine without trouble but when the sepoy were called on to give up those in their possession they refused and rose in mutiny (20th July). Fire being opened by the British troops they fled from the cantonment and marched off to Arrah the headquarters of the Shahabad district without any pursuit being attempted. Next day the cavalry regiment at Sughah rose murdered Major Holmes and other Europeans and marched off to join the rebels in Azamgarh.

**The defence of Arrah**—In the district of Shahabad the mutineers found—what was lacking elsewhere in Bengal and Bihar—a local leader round whom the people rallied. This was an old Rajput zamindar Kurr Singh of Indipur. Six weeks before the District Magistrate Herwald Wale had

reported that, in case of an outbreak he was a man to be reckoned with. Nominally, the owner of vast estates, he was really a ruined man being overwhelmed with debts. His only means of recovery would be to strike for his own hand if a rising took place, when his feudal influence would make him extremely dangerous. If authority was overthrown, he would become supreme in the district. Unknown to the authorities, Kuar Singh had already been engaged in intrigues, and as soon as the mutineers crossed into Shahabad, he put himself at their head and was joined by thousands of men from the surrounding villages.

The defence of Arrah was only rendered possible by the presence of 50 Sikhs of Rattray's Police Battalion and by the fact that a small bungalow, originally intended for a billiard room, had been made ready for defence by Vicars Boyle, an engineer engaged in the preliminary work of extending the railway through the district. It stood only forty yards away from his own house, and Boyle, anticipating a rising, had laid in provisions and bricked up the open arches on the lower floor and the spaces between the pillars of the verandah on the upper. As

soon as the news came that the mutineers were making for Arrah the civilians in the station shut themselves up in this small bungalow with the 50 Sikhs. They numbered only 83 viz 9 Europeans 6 Eurasians 3 Indians and 50 Sikhs. Here they held out against three sepoy regiments and thousands of Kuar Singh's followers.

The most critical moment was when the rebels first advanced to the attack. Charging the bungalow from every side they could have rushed it if they had had the dogged determination which inspired its defenders. They were met with a steady well directed fire and changing their tactics commenced a siege. Next day they brought up two small cannons one of which was mounted on the top of Mr Boyle's house where it completely commanded the inside of the little fortress. Every attack was met with unfailing courage every new stratagem with unfailing ingenuity and resource. The untiring labour of the Sikhs according to Herwald Wake met and prevented every disaster. Water began to run short a well was dug in less than 12 hours. The rebels raised a barricade on the top of the opposite house our own grew in the same proportion. A shot shod

a weak place in our defence, the place was made twice as strong as before. We began to feel the want of animal food and short allowance of grain, a sally was made at night and four sheep brought in, and finally, when we ascertained beyond a doubt that the enemy were undermining us, a countermine was quickly dug."

**The relief of Arrah.**—On the fourth day of the siege a relief expedition of 400 English soldiers was sent from Dinapore, but was cut up in an ambuscade on the outskirts of the town. The relief was finally effected by a force of less than half that strength under Vincent Eyre, then a major in the Bengal Artillery. Hearing of the siege of Arrah, when on his way up the Ganges with a battery, he determined to attempt the relief of the hard-pressed little garrison. Taking with him 150 men of the 5th Fusiliers, three guns with 34 artillery-men and a dozen mounted volunteers, he cut his way through in spite of the greatest difficulties and the overwhelming strength of the enemy. The country was largely under water, the guns had to be drawn by bullocks taken from the plough. When near Arrah, the relief force



was met by Kuar Singh with an army composed of about two thousand mutineers and eight thousand of his own followers, whom it succeeded in routing after a fierce fight. The same night the siege, which had lasted seven days (27th July—2nd August) was raised and next morning Eyre marched in. The defence was, in his opinion, one of the most remarkable feats in Indian history. His own relief of Arrah was an exploit of high endeavour and splendid achievement; it was also the first check received by the rebels since the Mutiny began. Had Arrah fallen the rebel forces would undoubtedly have spread over Bihar.

**The insurrection in Shahabad**—After receiving reinforcements of 300 men Eyre followed up his success by the capture of Kuar Singh's stronghold at Jagdispur, where the rebel chief had established a manufactory of arms and ammunition and had laid in a vast quantity of stores. Kuar Singh himself escaped with the greater part of his followers and subsequently took a leading part in the fighting in Azamgarh. His brother Amar Singh held out in the south of Shahabad.

where he was joined by the 5th Irregular Cavalry from Bhagalpur

In April 1858 the fire of insurrection, which had burnt low, flared up again with the return to Jagdispur of Kuar Singh, who had been driven out of Azamgarh. He himself was wounded and dying, his followers, without field guns and with little ammunition, seemed broken and dispirited. When however a force of 400 men marched from Arrah against Jagdispur, Kuar Singh inflicted on it a crushing defeat. He died a few days later—an old man, over 70 years of age, true to the traditions of a Rajput warrior, fighting to the last.

His followers maintained their position under Amar Singh, their numbers swollen by the accession of recruits from Shahabad as well as by reinforcements of mutineers from other districts. The great stretch of jungle round Jagdispur made their dislodgement a most difficult task, it was estimated that it would take 320,000 men six weeks to cut it all down, and it was not till the close of the year that the rebels were finally suppressed after a long and arduous campaign conducted first by Sir Edward Lugard and afterwards by General Douglas.

When rounded up by an army of 7 000 men divided into seven columns, they made their escape to the Kaimur Hills hotly pursued by mounted infantry. There they got no rest and eventually the whole force was broken up and dispersed.

**Other parts of Bihar** —After the disastrous repulse of the first expedition sent to the relief of Arrah the Commissioner Mr. Tavler assured of the impossibility of Eyre effecting its relief with a much smaller force—he was advised by the military authorities that a force of at least 1 000 men was required—and convinced that failure would be followed by a general rising issued orders that the civil officers should leave Muzaffarpur, Motihari, Gaya and Barh (in Patna district) and withdraw to Patna his object being to prevent sacrifice of life and to concentrate strength in a central place with communications along the Ganges. Eyre's victory as providential as it was unexpected changed the whole position a few days later. Actually only Muzaffarpur and Barh were abandoned in accordance with Tavler's orders for a short time. The Collector of Gaya indeed started for Patna but soon thought

better of it and returned after going a few miles. The civil officers of Motihari had retreated to a factory a little distance away when the troops mutinied at Sugauli, but had returned shortly afterwards and on receipt of Tayler's message the Magistrate refused to leave the station again. Chapra had been abandoned at the same time as Motihari, and the Magistrate came back a fortnight later. Order had been preserved in his absence by a Muhammadan gentleman who had been authorized to exercise the functions of the Magistrate during his absence the jail and treasury were untouched, and the Najibs or station guards were at their posts. At Muzaffarpur, as soon as the Magistrate and other officers withdrew, a small detachment of cavalry broke out in mutiny, but the police and Najibs were staunch and drove them off when they attacked the jail, treasury and Government offices. The Magistrate, thereupon returned. He found everything quiet and was welcomed by the people who were glad to see the restoration of lawful authority.

Nowhere in North Bihar was there a real risk of a rising among the people after the relief of Arrah, though Saran was infested

by parties of marauding sepoys. The danger lay in the movements of muts from other districts and incursions Gorakhpur where a Muhammadan had claimed himself as a Governor under the name of Oudh. The presence of the Naval Brigade and Gurkha troops sent from Nepal by Maharajah Bahadur proved a sure defence. The serious fighting took place at the end of 1857 when two actions were fought on the same day against different bodies of rebels. At Gorakhpur one of which numbered 67000 their rout cleared the districts of the Ganges.

The district of Gava was long the scene of serious disturbances. A few days after his return the Collector withdrew from his headquarters station in consequence of a report that one of the regiments who had mutinied at Dinapore was marching to attack it. As he was withdrawing a body of 80 soldiers who had been sent to Gava the Nujibs rose broke open the prison and with the released convicts attacked the party which succeeded in reaching Calcutta with the contents of the treasury. Gava was occupied a fortnight later—a brief respite in which the forces of disorder

full play Subsequently the district was the high road for mutinous regiments marching from the east to join the insurrection in Shahabad On 14th August, two days before the re-occupation of Gaya, a detachment of the 5th Irregular Cavalry mutinied at Bhagalpur and marched to the regimental headquarters at Rohini in the Santal Parganas, where they were joined by their comrades The mutineers having failed to induce the 32nd Native Infantry Regiment at Bausi to join them, marched to and through the Gaya district, breaking open the district jail on the way They were followed in October by some companies of the 32nd which suddenly rose at Deoghar and after murdering their officers marched off to reinforce the rebels under Amar Singh in Shahabad

The incursions of these mutineers, who preyed on the country through which they passed, were not the only trouble There were local risings, one leader openly proclaimed that the rule of the British was at an end, boasted that he would destroy every Government building between the Son and Monghyr and made grants of land to his followers At another time a raid was made by rebels from Shahabad, and it was not till June 1858

that the last embers of revolt were extinguished by Rattray's Battalion

**The rising in Chota Nagpur**—In final minute on the Mutiny the Lieutenant Governor expressed the opinion that no portion in the province was subject to such continued disturbances as Chota Nagpur—a scattered and not easily accessible state were garrisoned by native troops who in most every instance broke out into mutiny the stations being abandoned, jails broken open and bands of convicts scattered over the face of the country the treasures plundered and the lives of the European officers only saved by timely flight. Its population is composed chiefly of half savage ignorant and highly excitable with a number of petty chiefs able at any time to collect a rabble round them and now formidable. The disaffection of the very troops intended to keep them in check. In Palamau in Chhota Nagpur and in Sambalpur there have been no risings but he added—The risings have by no means general but have in every instance been confined to a small and disaffected section of the savage tribes and their petty chiefs and often

much from personal animosity amongst the chiefs and people themselves as from any dislike to British rule. That there has been any difficulty in repressing them arose from the nature of the country and climate and the extreme scarcity of troops, not from any inherent strength or importance in the risings themselves, which in ordinary times would have been easily quelled." Fortunately when different aboriginal tribes rose in Chota Nagpur, no move was made by the Santals in the Santal Parganas, who had learnt a lesson in the Santal war three years previously.

The troops at Hazaribagh, of whom most belonged to a detachment of one of the regiments stationed at Dinapore, rose at the end of July as soon as news came of the mutiny at Dinapore. A detachment of the Ramgarh Battalion, which was sent against them from Ranchi, also mutinied on the march and returned with the Hazaribagh mutineers to Ranchi, where the rest of the battalion made common cause with them. The mutineers remained in occupation of Ranchi for over a month, and then after plundering the town set out for Shahabad, with the idea of enrolling themselves under



Kuar Singh At the end of September while looting the town of Chatra in the Hazaribagh district they were attacked by a small force of 300 men half English soldiers and half Sikhs of Rattray's Battalion who cut them to pieces though they had four guns and were double their number This action cleared Chota Nagpur of the mutinous sepoys who had received little or no local support But serious disorder followed from insurrections in Singhbhum and Palamanu and there were also sporadic disturbances due to aboriginals who took advantage of the relaxation of authority to form marauding parties and avenge themselves on money lenders and landlords who had ousted them from their lands

The sepoys at Churhisa in Singhbhum made no move till the beginning of September when persuaded that British rule was at an end they plundered the treasury broke open the jail and set out for Ranchi They were held up by a flooded river and attacked by the Huzars who indignant at the idea of the sepoys making off with the revenue collected from themselves cut off all stragglers The sepoys were only too glad to accept the invitation of the Raja of Porahat then a feudatory



sweep was made, neither sex nor age being spared

The rising in Palamau was due to a revolt of the Kharwars and Cheros under two Kharwar chiefs who received promises of help from Amar Singh in Shahabad. Both tribes were animated by hatred of Rajput landlords against whom they had an old feud and by the idea that British rule was at an end and they could consequently restore the pristine past in which the Cheros and Kharwars held the country under their own chieftains without having to pay rent to alien landlords. As in Singhbhum the insurrection was protracted by the fact that only small detachments were available for expeditions against the rebels it was at length suppressed towards the close of 1858 when the two Kharwar leaders were captured and hanged.

**The rebellion in Sambalpur** —The district of Sambalpur was the only part of Orissa infected with the spirit of revolt. There the insurrectionary movement assumed the character of an obstinate rebellion. The troops at Sambalpur which consisted of a detachment of the Rangbarh Battalion remained loyal and the rebellion was entirely

due to local disaffection, a large portion of the population rising under a member of the old ruling family Sambalpur had been a feudatory State till eight years before, when it was transformed into a district, the last chief having died without issue and expressed a wish that the State should come under the direct administration of the British Long before his death the State had been claimed by one Surendra Sai, a descendant of one of the former Rajas Since 1827 he had been endeavouring to secure the State for himself, but in 1840 he was convicted of a murder and sentenced to imprisonment for life He was one of the prisoners released when the mutineers broke open the jail at Hazaribagh and soon made his way back to Sambalpur

There he found no lack of followers, for the landholders were exasperated by the injudicious settlements of land revenue which had followed the annexation The revenue had been largely enhanced, rent-free grants had been resumed and assessed to revenue, and the landholders were smarting under their grievances They put themselves at the head of the old feudal militia (*paiks*) and, with a few exceptions, threw in their lot with Surendra Sai The rebellion was mainly a matter

of jungle warfare, in which small bodies of troops contended with elusive bands of insurgents. It was stamped out early in 1858, but Surendra Sai remained at large with a band of adherents and for four years frustrated all attempts to capture him. He maintained himself by terrorism villagers who dared to offer any assistance to the officers of Government being murdered with their families and their villages plundered and burnt down. The offer in 1861 of a free pardon and the restitution of confiscated property to all rebels except Surendra Sai, his son and brother induced many of the rebel band to surrender and Surendra Sai gave himself up in 1862. He did not however abandon the object of his life viz the recovery of the Sambalpur Raj and in 1864 the plots and intrigues in which he engaged caused his arrest and imprisonment as a dangerous political offender.

**The Mutiny in Bengal** —In Bengal there was no hostile movement due to the disaffection of the people the only trouble was that caused by the mutiny of sepoys. After the troops at Barrackpore and Berhampore had been disarmed the only sepoys left under arms

were those stationed at Rampur Hat, Chittagong, Jalpaiguri and Dacca, and the Sheikhwati Battalion at Midnapore and Bankura. The last remained loyal and did good service in Chota Nagpur and Sambalpur. There were mutinies among all the others, but not till long after the sepoys elsewhere had risen.

The men of the 32nd Native Infantry at Rampur Hat did not break out till the middle of October. They then marched through Gaya into Shahabad and thence to the west after a defeat by Captain Rattray. Three companies of the 34th Native Infantry at Chittagong remained quiet till the night of 18th November, when they suddenly rose, plundered the treasury, broke open the jail and marched off without any attempt on the lives or property of the European residents. Making their way through the Tippera district and the Tripura State into the districts of Cachar and Sylhet, they lost heavily in attacks by the Sylhet Light Infantry. The survivors wandered about the jungle, where some were cut off by Kuki scouts, others perished miserably of starvation. Of the whole number only three or four escaped death or capture.

As soon as the news of the mutiny at Chittagong reached Dacca, it was decided to disarm the two companies of the 73rd Native Infantry stationed there. A party of sailors and volunteers found the sepoys drawn up with two guns ready for resistance. A short and sharp engagement ended in the sepoys being driven out. They marched north towards Jalpaiguri where the main body of the regiment was cantoned with a detachment of the 23rd Cavalry. Jalpaiguri itself was saved from the risk of a mutiny by the promptitude of Captain Curzon who marched down from Darjeeling with 100 Europeans and 300 Gurkhas. Part of the 73rd and a squadron of the cavalry regiment on being sent out against the sepoys advancing from Dacca mutinied and marched off into Purnea where they were defeated by a force under the Commissioner and eventually escaped through the Nepal Tarai into Oudh. The Dacca mutineers failing to get the support which they expected from their comrades at Jalpaiguri also made for Purnea. They too were driven off by the Commissioner and escaping into the Tarai marched through it to Oudh.

### **Want of combination among the sepoy.**—

Of all the sepoy regiments stationed in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa only one remained loyal throughout the Mutiny, *viz*, the Sheikhawati Battalion. All the others had to be disbanded or disarmed, or they mutinied wholly or in part. The most remarkable feature of the different outbreaks was the want of combination among the different regiments and even of co-operation between different sections of the same regiment. There was clearly concerted action in the mutinies at the end of July 1857, when the regiments at Dinapore mutinied and were joined by the levies of the Kuar Singh in Shahabad, and it was no casual coincidence that the cavalry at Sugauli mutinied the next day and that the troops at Hazaribagh followed suit. Elsewhere, however, the mutinies did not synchronize. On the contrary, they came by instalments widely separated in time, and some regiments were divided among themselves. For instance, the 34th Native Infantry at Barrackpore was disaffected almost to a man and had to be disbanded early in May, but a detachment at Chittagong did not rise till October. Again, when the 32nd Native Infantry mutinied at Deoghar and Rampur



That their comrades at the depôt at Bausi were staunch in spite of efforts to seduce them and marching quietly to Raniganj surrendered their arms of their own accord. Had there been simultaneous and co-ordinated action the sepoys would have had the country at their mercy.

**The absence of popular support** — Nowhere moreover did the mutineers meet with popular support except in Shahabad. The insurrections in Sambalpur Singhbhum and Palamau were entirely independent of the military movement. The rebellion in Shahabad was due to the fact that many of the sepoys had their homes there as well as to the extraordinary influence of Kuar Singh. It was his leadership also that attracted mutineers from other districts and made Shahabad a focus of revolt. Even there however the people were not united. Muhammadan villages remained quiet while Brahman and Rajput villages were rising round them.

Nowhere the mutineers so far from receiving sympathy and support had to maintain themselves by terrorism. Their usual procedure was to plunder the treasury, break open the jail either fraternizing with the

convicts or impressing them to carry their plunder and to march away committing rape and rapine. Describing the march of one mutinous regiment through his district, the Magistrate of Gava wrote: "Women taken from their houses and carried off, to be a few days later left on the roadside and their places taken by the results of a fresh raid, industrious men plundered of all they had, rape, robbery and murder marked the progress of these ruffians." He was equally graphic in his account of the disorder which prevailed during the brief interregnum which followed his withdrawal from the district. "Ten days of anarchy had disgusted all quiet men with what they called the Hindustani Raj. They had seen how, not only in the town but in the country, every element of disorder, violence and wickedness was rife, how the village ryots, as well as the town *badmash*," (bad character or ruffian) "instinctively turned to plunder and violence, how rampant and how general was that spirit of the beast of prey which acknowledges no common bounds and no law save the indulgence of its passions."

The two common factors throughout the disturbances were, he noted, "the influence

of Kuar Singh and the universal identification of a Hindustani Government with license and plunder     *Hindustani Raj hua—Kuar Singh la Raj Lut Lut* ' (i.e., There is now a Hindustani rule the rule of Kuar Singh Loot Loot ) ' were the cries with which one zamindar attacked a weaker one, one village preyed upon a neighbouring hamlet or a dozen scoundrels knocked down and fleeced a solitary traveller "

## CHAPTER XV.

### The Lieutenant-Governors, 1854-71.

**The system of Government from 1833 to 1853.**—Under the Government of India Act of 1833 the Government of Bengal was vested in the Governor-General of India in the capacity of Governor of Fort William in Bengal. When he was absent from Bengal, he delegated his functions as Governor to one of the members of the Governor-General's Council, usually the senior member, who was appointed Deputy Governor *ad hoc*. With the expansion of the British empire in India and the higher organization of government the defects of this system became more and more apparent. It was impossible for the Governor-General, responsible with his Council for the government of all India, to give close personal supervision to the administration of a large province like Bengal, which included not only the areas now comprised in the Presidency of Bengal and the province of Bihar and Orissa, but also Assam, Arakan and Tenasserim.

Lord Dalhousie, in spite of his indefatigable energy and passion for work, found

his dual functions so far beyond his powers that he appointed a Deputy Governor even when he was in Bengal. This arrangement relieved the Governor General but involved frequent changes in the personnel at the head of the Government. In the twelve years ending in 1850 there were nine different Governors or Deputy Governors and the last appointment of General Sir J. H. Littleton as Deputy Governor gave rise to hostile criticism for his experience was military and he had no training in civil administration.

The system was also productive of curious anomalies. The Government of Bengal had a separate Secretariat but practically no political authority and financially it was in complete subordination to the Government of India. The Governor had no independent financial powers and had to obtain the sanction of the Government of India of which he himself was the head to even trifling new expenditure such as the increase of the pay of a subordinate post. It is no wonder that Dalhousie (writing as Governor to the Governor General in Council to propose the introduction of the telegraph) remarked: "Ever since all the world over move

faster now-a-days than it used to do except the transaction of Indian business ”

**The appointment of a Lieutenant-Governor.**—Lord Dalhousie, representing that the double burden was more than mortal man could fitly bear, urged that he should be relieved of direct responsibility for the administration of Bengal. Effect was given to his recommendation in the Charter Act of 1853. This empowered the Court of Directors to appoint a separate Governor and also provided that, until a Governorship was constituted, the Governor-General might appoint a Lieutenant-Governor from among officers having 10 years' service or more. The power to appoint a Governor was not exercised and for nearly 60 years Bengal was under the administration of Lieutenant-Governors. The first of the line was Mr (afterwards Sir Frederick) Halliday, who assumed office in 1854. He had the same secretariat staff as the Governor had had, *viz*, one Secretary and two Under-Secretaries, but his jurisdiction was reduced by detaching Tenasserim. Arakan remained under the Lieutenant-Governor till 1862, in which year also Sambalpur with its dependencies was transferred to

code was the fruit of many years work. Its compilation had been prescribed by the Charter Act of 1833 and the first draft which was prepared by a Law Commission over which Macaulay presided and of which he was the moving spirit prepared the first draft and submitted it to Government in 1837. Long years of examination and revision by Macaulay's successors in the Law Membership followed. Eventually in 1856 the Code was introduced in the form of a Bill the passage of which was interrupted by the Mutiny, and it only became law four years later.

The final result was admirable embodying the original genius of Macaulay's draftmanship and the fruits of the expert criticism of lawyers and judges notably Sir Barnes Peacock. The code which preserves the spirit of the English criminal law but discards its mass of technicalities while adapting it to Indian conditions has been eulogized by Sir James Stephen as by far the best code of criminal law in the world. Contained in the compass of a small volume it is admirably clear and concise. It has been said that the junior officer of Government keeps it in his saddle bag and the senior officer in his head. It has moreover been a civilizing influence. Acts are

prohibited by it which were not regarded as offences by the Indian population, and it has therefore been claimed with some justice that it has taught a new morality, that in this respect the law has been a schoolmaster

The Code came into force in the beginning of 1862, when it superseded the Muhammadan law still in force and caused the abolition of the Muhammadan law officers who still advised the courts. The work of codification was advanced still further with the enactment of the Criminal Procedure Code in 1861

**Police reform.**—The modern system of police was inaugurated in 1861-62 under the operation of Act V of 1861. The policing of the country had hitherto been entrusted to a force, partly civil and partly military, which was inefficient and corrupt. It was described in 1859 by the first Lieutenant Governor, Sir Frederick Halliday, as a curse to the country. Crime had not diminished in quantity. Dacoities were as numerous as ever—in the neighbourhood of Calcutta they were even more numerous—but they had diminished in cruelty and atrocity. For their suppression a special department was maintained. The people were too apathetic to exert themselves



individually for the suppression of crime. Landowners were often more interested in sheltering the criminal than in giving him up to justice. The subordinate police officers were underpaid and being exposed to great temptations extremely corrupt. The large rivers which were the highways of traffic and throughout large areas the only means of communication afforded special facilities for dacoits. When a boat was attacked and plundered far from any village the unfortunate boatman or traveller preferred to continue his journey rather than be involved in a police inquiry which meant certain trouble and promised uncertain success.

Without going into details of the reformed organization it may be mentioned that the basis of the new system was the appointment of a police officer (the Superintendent) for each district who took over from the Magistrate the organization and discipline of the force. The military police force was gradually disbanded and absorbed in the new civil police which also took over the work of the District Department in 1863-64.

**The establishment of the High Courts 1862** — The superior courts of law established in the early days of the Company's rule

continued till 1862 viz , the Supreme Court for the presidency town of Calcutta and for cases in which British subjects were concerned and the Company's appellate courts, i.e . the Sadr Nizamat Adalat and the Sadr Diwan Adalat for cases tried in the district courts. These were abolished on the creation of the High Court of Calcutta, formally known as the High Court of Judicature at Fort William, the original side of which represents the Supreme Court in having ordinary original jurisdiction over Calcutta and the appellate side the Sadr Courts in having control and appellate powers over all other courts in the province. Sir Barnes Peacock was the last Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the first Chief Justice of the High Court. The first Indian Judge to sit on the High Court was Sambhu Nath Pandit (1863-67).

**Creation of the Legislative Council, 1862.**—In 1862 a legislature was constituted for Bengal by the establishment of the Legislative Council under the provisions of the Indian Councils Act of the previous year. It consisted of twelve members all nominated by the Lieutenant-Governor, of whom

not less than one-third had to be non-officials. This minimum was exceeded by the Lieutenant Governor nominating 6 non-official members Indian and European. The association of either Indians or non-officials with the actual business of legislation had hitherto been unknown.

The deliberations of the Council were confined to legislation. Not even a motion was permitted unless it related to a Bill; questions about the conduct of the administration were also debarred and there was no means of ventilating grievances except in connection with legislation. The Council was in fact simply a committee for the purpose of making laws, a committee by means of which the executive Government obtained assistance and advice in legislation while the public had the advantage of publicity when an enactment was to be made.

**The indigo disturbances, 1860-61** — The chief problem during the Lieutenant Governorship of Sir John Peter Grant (1859-62) was that created by a mass movement against the cultivation of indigo in Nadia and Jessore, the principal indigo growing districts of Bengal. Owing to the increase of

the prices obtained for agricultural produce, the ryot found the cultivation of indigo no longer profitable. During the years 1857-60 the value of other crops, such as cereals and oil-seeds, had been doubled. The wages of agricultural labour had also gone up, but the prices paid to the cultivator for indigo had not been increased by a single anna. The planters insisted on paying the old prices, though they no longer covered the cost of production, they also insisted on the ryots growing indigo to the same extent as before—commonly one-sixteenth of their holdings. The unpopularity of indigo cultivation led to breach of contracts and fraudulent evasion of agreements by the cultivators after they had taken advances, and some planters enforced their demands by coercive measures, such as the imprisonment of refractory tenants or the seizure of their cattle.

The system of advances under which indigo was grown was a constant cause of irritation. The ryots often sunk into a state of chronic indebtedness, the advances not being repaid and being carried on in the factory books from father to son. To add to the cultivators' grievances, they were exposed to oppression and extortion by the agents and

underlings of the planters. The radical cause however of the movement was the increase of the prices paid for ordinary crops and the rise of the wages of agricultural labourers.

The cultivators at last struck against being required to grow a crop which meant a dead loss to them. The position became critical in the latter part of 1860 when the combination among the ryots became general and there was a danger of an outbreak on a larger scale. The Lieutenant Governor touring by river in the two affected districts found the banks of the rivers literally lined with people begging for an order prohibiting indigo cultivation. For 14 hours he said from dawn to dusk he steamed through a continued double street of suppliants—a remarkable demonstration showing capacity for organization and combined action. Lord Canning himself wrote that for about a week the situation caused him more anxiety than he had had since the fall of Delhi during the Mutiny. He felt that a shot fired in fear or anger by one foolish planter might put every factory in Lower Bengal in flame. The excitement took a violent form in some places the tenants

gathering in tumultuous mobs, which in a few instances attacked factories

The danger of wide-spread outbreaks was, however, averted by the prompt preventive action of Government. Troops were sent to disturbed areas, two gun-boats patrolled the rivers, the magisterial staff was strengthened. In addition to executive action, some special legislation was passed and a Commission, known as the Indigo Commission, was appointed to investigate the whole question. The only action which the Commission recommended was the effective enforcement of the existing law. This was done and various reforms which had been contemplated were brought into force, the subdivisional system being extended, the new police system introduced, and small cause courts established. The excitement gradually died down, but a blow had been struck at the indigo industry in these two districts, from which it never recovered. Some factories continued to work for another thirty years, when the industry, unable to compete against the synthetic dye invented in Germany, died a natural death so far as Bengal is concerned.

**The "Nil Darpan".**—The keen interest of the Bengali public in the dispute between

the planters and cultivators was reflected in a play produced when the excitement was at its height. This was the *Nil Darpan* literally the mirror of indigo the earliest and probably the finest play of the dramatist Dinabandhu Mitra. Its object was to expose the abuses of indigo planting and its preface explained that it depicted the fortunes of a cultivator whom the indigo system compelled to take advances to neglect his own land to cultivate crops which beggared him reducing him to the position of a serf and a vagabond. The play created a great sensation. A translation into English was

**The state of Calcutta.**—A lurid light is thrown on the insanitary state of Calcutta at this time by a report issued in 1864 by the president of the Sanitary Commission, Sir John Strachey. His remarks are so scathing as to recall the damnatory account given by Mackintosh eighty years before, which has been quoted in a previous chapter. The state of Calcutta, he said, was a scandal and disgrace to a civilized government. Putting aside questions of public health and looking at it from the point of view whether of common decency or of good government, it was disgraceful to the last degree. The city was "literally unfit for the habitation of civilized man." The state of the south of the city containing the European quarter was often most offensive and objectionable, no language could describe adequately the abominations of the northern division with its horrible open drains, in which the filth of the city stagnated. The state of the Hooghly was as abominable as that of the city itself, over 5,000 corpses a year were thrown into it from Calcutta, the Government hospitals' quota being 1,500. The corpses floated up and down with the tide or remained entangled in the cables of the shipping. The police sunk



as many as they could but their efforts were unequal to the number. From this river the majority of the inhabitants drew water for all domestic purposes.

**Municipal government of Calcutta** — In 1863 the municipal administration of Calcutta was vested in a corporation curiously constituted for it consisted of the resident Justice of the Peace not only of Calcutta but also of all Bengal Bihar and Orissa. As a matter of fact only 25 out of the 120 Justices qualified to sit on the corporation took an active part in municipal life and it was soon provided by an amending Act that not all the resident Justices of Bengal Bihar and Orissa should be members of the corporation but only such as were nominated by the Lieutenant Governor. This was the first step towards local self government in Bengal for the Justices were representatives of different sections of the community.

and prevent friction between the corporation and the police

Calcutta made a great advance during the twelve years it was administered by the corporation of Justices. A filtered water supply was introduced, an extensive system of drainage was installed, the streets were lit with gas, and numerous other improvements were carried out. The nuisance of floating corpses was stopped by orders prohibiting their being deposited in the river Hooghly and by arranging to have the bodies of paupers burnt at municipal expense. At the end of the twelve years Calcutta was beginning to have the reputation of a health resort among the Indian population.

The constitution of the corporation was made more representative in 1876, when the elective system was introduced and the number of Commissioners on the Corporation was fixed at 72, of whom two-thirds were to be elected, and one-third appointed by Government.

To continue this sketch of the municipal history of Calcutta, the area of the municipality was increased by the inclusion of some suburban areas in 1888, when the number of

Commissioners was raised to 75. The Corporation as thus constituted did much to develop and improve Calcutta but by the end of the century it had outlived its usefulness. A sanitary survey disclosed an appalling state of affairs in many quarters there was a grave danger that plague if once it obtained a footing in the city would decimate it, the executive was powerless to carry out the reforms necessary for modern standards of public health and municipal administration. According to the Lieutenant Governor (Sir Alexander Mackenzie) the Corporation was constituted on a system which it was "almost impossible for any one were he an angel from heaven to work satisfactorily. It was the Calcutta of this period that was described by Rudyard Kipling under the title of *The City of Dreadful Night*.

Radical change were made by an Act passed in 1899. The number of Commissioners was reduced from 75 to 50 and the proportion of elected representatives from two-thirds to one-half. A body called the General Committee was set up as an authority co-ordinate with the Corporation the Chairman was freed from the control of the

Corporation in his executive functions. These changes met with strenuous opposition—28 Commissioners resigned as a protest when the Act was passed—but the new constitution justified itself. A more vigorous administration made for steady progress, and the transformation of Calcutta into a city with modern civic amenities was accelerated by the creation in 1912 of an Improvement Trust to sweep away the insanitary congested areas which disfigured it and to drive spacious streets through it.

By an Act passed in 1923 the Corporation has again been enlarged and placed on a more democratic basis. The number of Councillors has been fixed at 75, of whom 63 are elected. The Chairman has given place to a Mayor and a Chief Executive Officer appointed by the Corporation. The boundaries have been extended by the inclusion of the suburban municipalities of Maniktala, Cossipur-Chitpur and Garden Reach, as a result of which nearly 11 square miles have been added to the city and its population increased by 175,000. Communal representation has been introduced, for 15 seats on the corporation are reserved for Muhammadans, who are to be returned by special

Muhammadian electorates for the first nine years and then by mixed electorates. The monetary qualifications for a vote have been reduced the principle of one man, one vote has been adopted and female suffrage has been introduced.

### Prohibition of hook swinging, 1865 —

There had long been protests against the practice of hook swinging during the festival known as Chhatak Puja. This was a species of self torture due to religious fervour which was confined to Bengal Bihar and Orissa. The apparatus consisted of a fixed upright pole 30 feet high or more on which another long pole revolved. To the latter two ropes were attached from one of which was suspended the man who swung while the other was used to raise and lower the pole and also to revolve it. The devotee had hooks like butchers hooks thrust through the muscles of his back was lifted off his feet by the men pulling on the other rope and was whirled through the air invoking the god Mahadeo or Siva and scattering flowers on the assembled worshippers below. Needless to say it was a dangerous practice for if the hooks tore through the flesh the man was dashed

to the ground. There was a growing feeling against this custom on the ground that, though voluntary, it was not essential to religion and was in itself barbarous and cruel. Efforts were made to induce the people to abandon it by the exercise of the influence of local officers and by securing the co-operation of landowners and others, but these efforts had little practical result. Finally, in 1865, the Lieutenant-Governor issued orders requiring Magistrates to prohibit hook-swinging, under the powers vested in them by law, as being dangerous to life, health or safety, and to prosecute and punish according to law anyone who disobeyed such orders by taking part in or abetting hook-swinging.

**The Orissa famine.**—In 1866 the province was visited by famine, which in Orissa was an appalling calamity. There widespread floods supervened on famine, and it was estimated that about one-third of the population, or one million persons, perished of starvation or diseases directly or indirectly connected with bad food, privation or starvation.

Orissa was at that time an almost isolated tract. The one road which connected it with Calcutta passed over large unbridged rivers

and was impracticable for wheeled traffic during the monsoon. In the same season steamers could not land cargoes on its surf-beaten shore except in such small quantities as surf boats could carry.

Owing to drought in 1865 the winter rice crop on which the people mainly depended failed; only one third of an average crop was reaped. The stocks of rice in the country were very low for there had been an active export trade and the cultivators had not kept a reserve sufficient to counterbalance a short harvest. No one, whether official or non-official, had any conception of the extent to which stocks had been depleted till it was found that the markets were empty and the country almost destitute of food. It was then too late to import supplies for the monsoon had set in and Orissa was cut off both by land and sea. The people it has been said shut up in a narrow province between the pathless jungle and an implacable sea were in the condition of passengers in a ship without provision. There was money with which to buy food but there was no stock any food to buy.

The Executive Committee of Government in dealing with the famine was so united at an

early stage It consisted simply of a failure to make inquiries and ascertain what stocks existed There was then no Famine Code, the measures, preliminary and other, which are necessary in the event of crop failure had not been worked out or laid down The only famine policy at the time was, briefly, that public works should be opened to provide labour for the poor, that private liberality should be invoked and exercised through relief committees, and that Government should otherwise leave the ordinary laws of demand and supply to work through the channels of trade and not interfere with their operation

Distress was first apparent in the district of Puri, where the want of food threatened to close the relief works The Board of Revenue however declined, on 1st February, 1866, to import rice, saying that if the market favoured importers, rice would find its way to Puri without Government interference, which could only do harm This view was endorsed by the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Cecil Beadon, who during a visit to Cuttack declared that if he were to attempt to interfere with prices, he would consider himself "no better than a dacoit or thief" He failed to realize the need of doing more than



always remain a monument of our failure a humiliation to the people of this country to the Government of this country and to those of our Indian officials of whom we had perhaps been a little too proud. At the same time we must hope that we might derive from it lessons which might be of real value to ourselves and that out of this deplorable evil good of no insignificant kind might ultimately arise. Good did result for action was taken to develop the resources of the country, to prevent the recurrence of similar calamities by opening up communications and constructing irrigation works and also to elaborate a sound and effective programme to be adopted in the event of scarcity.

The Orissa famine has many points of resemblance with the Irish famine of 1846-47. In both cases the country was mainly agricultural and the vast majority of the inhabitants depended for their subsistence on one crop—the potato in Ireland and winter rice in Orissa—the failure of which overwhelmed both peoples with famine. In both cases Government had no plans ready to cope with the catastrophe which was too vast for improvised remedies. Food enough to feed the people could not be brought in the count

and could not be imported in time to them. Relief was poured in later, but a large proportion of the population perished. The loss in Ireland, due to starvation and the diseases attendant in its wake as well as to emigration, was 2 millions. In Orissa it was half that figure.

**The famine in Bengal and Bihar.** The famine was by no means confined to Calcutta but nowhere else did it have such disastrous results. There were 200,000 deaths in Manbhum, 50,000 in Singhbhum, and 100,000 in Midnapore, while in Bihar there was much suffering, for the system of relief was ill-organized and defective.

**The Keonjhar risings, 1868 and 1871.** A disputed succession in the State of Keonjhar led to a rising among its aboriginal inhabitants in 1868. After the death of the Raja, one of his sons was installed, but his rights were challenged by a childless widow of his father, who supported another claimant. A combination of the Bhuiyas and other aboriginal tribes was formed in opposition to the young Raja's authority. They sacked the headquarters of the State, carried away the Minister as a hostage with fifty of the

adherents burnt and plundered villages. The insurrection lasted four months and force of over 1000 men reinforced by the levies of loyal chiefs and zemindars had to be employed for its suppression.

There was another rebellion among the Bhuins of Keonjhar in 1801 caused by the oppression and exactions of the Maharaja who fled to Cuttack. It was promptly suppressed by the local officers and police without military assistance and the Maharaja restored. The grievances of the Bhuins were settled and peace and order re-established.

**The weakness of the Government**—In connection with the famine of 1860 an instructive review of the system of government established in Bengal was given by a Commission appointed to investigate all its circumstances and to suggest the measures necessary to prevent the recurrence of such a disaster. They found that the system of administration was very different from that of other provinces. The Government represented by a large executive staff was strong and active, but its large responsibilities were in direct communication with the people and

made itself felt everywhere In Bengal, however, Government found expression in judicial rather than executive administration It had little executive machinery, in this sphere of activity it reigned but it did not govern It abstained on principle, apart from the want of machinery, from intervention in the affairs of the mass of the people It shrunk not only from interference with the relations of landlords and tenants, but even from attempts to ascertain their respective rights, which were construed as a breach of the Permanent Settlement

The weakness of the executive, so far from being harmful, might have done positive good, had there been indigenous institutions to form the basis of local self-government, but these did not exist The country was, in fact, governed for the most part only by the action of the courts of justice To these the people resorted in a degree which had no parallel in other countries The knowledge which they possessed of their legal rights and their readiness to take legal action were a check on the executive officers, who, being constantly liable to prosecution for proceedings taken in their official capacity, were little disposed to actions

of doubtful legality. At the same time education had made great strides among the Bengalis of whom a large proportion were men of acute intelligence. They made full and free use of the Press and understanding the value of organization had formed influential associations.

The weakness of the local executive was not compensated for by a strong central Government. The Lieutenant Governor assisted neither by an Executive Council nor by a Secretariat equal to that of Bombay or Madras was overwhelmed by the details of daily work and unable to give such close attention to the administration of the districts as the heads of other administrations. He had at his disposal the help of an important administrative body in the Board of Revenue but this had proved a broken reed in 1866. The whole system suffered from the defectiveness of the information available on any particular problem and also from the reluctance of Government to take direct action.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### The Lieutenant-Governors, 1871—1912.

**The policy of Sir George Campbell.**—In order to infuse more vigour into the administration, an officer having experience of the system of government outside Bengal was appointed Lieutenant-Governor on the retirement of Sir William Grey (1867—71). The officer selected was Sir George Campbell (1871--74), who declared his intention to adopt a more active system, instead of the old *laissez-faire*, with a more direct contact with the people. It was not enough, he held, to set up courts of justice, to keep the peace and to deal merely with those questions which forced themselves on the attention of Government. Such power and influence as the executive had should be used more decidedly to ensure the performance of its obligations by each class of the community and to apply, whether by legislation or executive action, suitable remedies for those defects and wants which a thorough knowledge of the facts might disclose. The first essential was to obtain reliable and accurate information on

which to base and elaborate measures of reform

His predecessors in his view had not had sufficient machinery for the purpose while excessive reliance on the efficacy of the Permanent Settlement and on judicial machinery had induced a belief that detailed information was less necessary in Bengal than in other parts of India. The Orissa famine however had taught among other things that Bengal could not be governed safely and with due regard to the lives and happiness of its people without more intimate knowledge of them and their affairs. There was he mentioned as instances of previous ignorance no reliable information even approximate regarding the area of land under cultivation the prevailing rent rates or the acreage sown with different crops. It was not known what districts produced more food than they consumed what districts hoarded food and what districts exported food. If a famine were to occur in one part of Bengal the Government could not tell from whence the deficiency of the famine tract could best be supplied.

The price was now instituted of hold in detailed and systematic inquiries as a

preliminary to action by Government, whether legislative or executive action. The comprehensive inquiries and compilation of statistics which have been the basis of subsequent government, were recognized as an administrative necessity. Information as to the population was now obtained by the census, first held in 1872, returns of agricultural prospects and crops were started, a beginning was made with the registration of vital statistics and an educational census was held.

**The census of 1872.**—The result of the census was to show that the population of the present Bengal was, in round figures,  $34\frac{2}{3}$  millions, and of Bihar and Orissa 28 millions. The enumeration was a fine achievement considering the difficulties to be overcome, but was necessarily imperfect owing to want of previous experience and the existence of prejudice and suspicion. The wildest rumours were started, *e g*, that the census was the prelude to forcible taxation, impressment for emigration, etc. The results revolutionized previous ideas as to the size of the population (which was found to be 26 millions in excess of the official estimate),



direction, as the application of the rates to educational objects might not be appreciated by the people

In the end it was decided only to raise rates called cesses from immovable property for the construction and maintenance of roads canals and other means of communication. The measure enacted for this purpose was the Road Cess Act of 1871. All cesses raised in a district were to be retained in it for its own local expenditure. Government would maintain the main lines of arterial communication and all others were to be made over to the District Committees which would settle on those to be kept up. A record and valuation of the landed property liable to the payment of the cess constituted a sound basis for local taxation and ensured the income necessary for its objects.

**The Bihar famine of 1873-74** — The salutary effects of Sir George Campbell's more active system were realized in 1873-74 when famine visited Bihar and also Northern Bengal and was dealt with effectively by his successor Sir Richard Temple. Inquiries were initiated at an early stage and Government set at work making preparations on a scale

and with a thoroughness which were unprecedented. In the belief that the operations of private trade could not be relied on, Government undertook the responsibility of providing the distressed districts with all the food likely to be required. The enormous quantity of 480,000 tons of rice was imported, the greater part from Burma, and distributed to various depôts. The knowledge that Government had determined to import on a large scale prevented an immediate rise of prices, it also prevented the rice trade of Bengal being diverted to new channels. The strange spectacle was consequently seen of fleets of ships taking rice out from the Hooghly and passing other ships bringing rice in. The quantity imported and sent to Bihar proved much in excess of real needs. About 340,000 tons were disposed of in relief operations, a quantity sufficient to feed three million people for seven months.

The actual famine area was 40,000 square miles and the population affected 17 millions, of these 735,000 were employed on relief work for 8 months, 450,000 received gratuitous relief daily for 6 months, and over three millions received advances of grain or

cash or were sold at low rates grain enough to support them for seven months. The total cost of State relief was six crores of rupees and the expenditure was perhaps lavish, but it must be remembered that the expense of relief was enormously enhanced by the absence of railways in some of the affected areas and that in any case the great object in view viz the prevention of death by starvation was fully attained. For the first time it was shown how a widespread famine could be dealt with successfully and the officers engaged in relief operations left among the people traditions of confidence in the power and will of Government to save them from the horrors of starvation.

**The separation of Assam**—Sir George Campbell found the administration of a great province such as Bengal was at this time too much for a single man. Relief was afforded by detaching Assam which was made a separate administration under a Chief Commissioner in 1874.

was, however, no new visitation and its ravages were by no means confined to that part of the province. It had been noticed in Jessore as early as 1826, and in Nadia seven years later. It assumed epidemic form in the latter district in 1846—48, and in Nadia and the 24-Parganas from 1857 to 1864. In 1857 it appeared in the Hooghly district and in the next twenty years spread through the Burdwan division, its duration in different localities being three to seven years. Its advance has been compared to that of a tide, for it reached a place one year and receded, reached it again next year with greater force and again receded, repeating this process till it became general. It caused an appalling mortality estimated by different observers at 30 per cent, 60 per cent, and even in some cases 90 per cent of the population of the villages affected.

A special commission of investigation, called the Epidemic Fever Commission, was appointed in 1864 which assigned various cause to the outbreak. One of its members, Raja Digambar Mitra, attributed its prevalence to the obstruction of the natural drainage by railways and roads, a theory which has been revived in recent years. Whatever may

have been its causation, the general consensus of opinion was that the disease was a malarial fever of an intensely aggravated type attended by an unprecedented mortality

employing their papers as a weapon of extortion

The Vernacular Press Act applied to India, but the license which it sought to prevent was specially prevalent in Bengal. English press whether conducted by Englishmen or Indians, required no restraint, showed a sense of responsibility, and its discussion of public events was marked by a reasonable and moderate spirit. It did not therefore come within the purview of the Act. The vernacular newspapers were conducted in a very different spirit, and, appealing as they did, to an ill-informed public, incapable of a balanced judgement on political issues, they constituted a real danger. Attacks and misrepresentation of the motives and measures of Government were habitual. An intention was manifest to disseminate disaffection, excite racial prejudice, and render Government, its officers and European agents generally hateful to the people.

Lord Lytton held that to prohibit mischievous utterances of the vernacular journals, was no more an interference with

liberty of the press than to prohibit the promiscuous sale of deadly poisons was an interference with the freedom of trade. The Vernacular Press Act sought to restrain license by means of a system of personal security. It was designed to prevent the dissemination of sedition, and also the practice of extortion, not by penal sentences but by warning offenders and those likely to offend and requiring them to enter into engagements and deposit security. Penalties could be imposed only if they broke their engagements or disregarded the warnings. It was therefore a preventive rather than a penal measure: its machinery working by means of checks rather than penalties.

Sir Ashley Eden, had to confess that the vernacular press as a rule was still disfigured by a spirit of reckless hostility to Government, that day after day it abused its opportunities and the forbearance of Government to propagate among a credulous people libels on individual officers, false imputations on the Courts of Justice and disloyal comments on the Government itself

### **Local self-government measures, 1884-**

**85.**—The necessity for a system of local self-government was recognised by Lord Lawrence, who in 1864 wrote “ Neither the central government nor the local governments are capable of providing either the funds or the executive agency for making the improvements of various kinds in all the cities and towns of India which are demanded by the rapidly developing wealth of the country. The people of India are quite capable of administering their own affairs the municipal feeling is deeply rooted in them

Holding the position we do in India every view of duty and policy should induce us to leave as much as possible of the business of the country to be done by the people ” As



will be shown later a system of local self government was first introduced in the towns and not in the districts

It was due to the initiative of Lord Ripon's Government that the people in rural areas were given a larger share in the management of local affairs. Hitherto the machinery of local self government outside the municipalities consisted only of district committees and district school committees (established since 1870) which were composed partly of officials and partly of non officials nominated by the local authorities. The road committees administered the funds raised from the road cess and expended them on roads and bridges; the school committees supervised Government schools and allotted grants in aid to private schools. Their functions were circumscribed their powers limited and there was no elective system.

In 1882 a scheme of local self government for rural areas was proposed by Lord Ripon's Government which defined its policy in the following words. It is not primarily with a view to improvement in administration that this measure is put forward and supported. It is chiefly desirable as an instrument of political and popular education. His Excellency

in Council has no doubt that, in the course of time, as local knowledge and local interest are brought to bear more freely upon local administration, improved efficiency will, in fact, follow "

To give effect to this policy a Bill was introduced in the Bengal Legislative Council which aimed at building up a system of local self-government from 'the bottom'. It contemplated a net-work of village bodies, called Union Committees, responsible for village affairs. The Unions were to be grouped in Circles under Local Boards, of which there was to be one for each subdivision. Control over the Local Boards, as well as over municipalities, was to be exercised by a Central Board, which was to form a Local Government Board. This last part of the Bill was, however, vetoed by the Secretary of State, who was in favour of making the district and not the subdivision the unit of organisation.

A revised Bill was accordingly brought forward and passed into law in 1885 as the Bengal Local Self-Government Act. This Act placed each district under a District Board, of which half the members were elected and half nominated. It had a position

*corresponding in some respects to the English County Councils* being invested with extensive powers in regard to education roads medical relief sanitation and other branches of public welfare and utility The Act also provided for the creation of subordinate bodies Local Boards having jurisdiction over subdivisions and electing members of the District Board Below them were Union Committees to manage the communal affairs of the villages

Committees and the promotion of village sanitation might stimulate the energies of Local Boards, which would find congenial work in supervising and guiding their action; or the Union Committees, being more closely in touch with local interests, might absorb the functions of the Local Boards and render them superfluous. The provisions regarding Union Committees, however, proved unworkable the committees having no power to raise funds and their functions being shadowy. It was not till 1908 that they were given powers of self-taxation and some authority in respect of village sanitation, drainage and water supply.

**The Bengal Village Self-Government Act, 1919.**—The defects of the Local Self-Government Act have been largely remedied by the Village Self-Government Act passed, under Lord Ronaldshay's Government, in 1919, by which Union Committees have been replaced by village authorities known as Union Boards, which are charged with far larger responsibilities, are entrusted with the authority of self-taxation, and are vested with the powers and duties necessary for the management of communal village affairs, *e g*, water supply,

sanitation village roads primary schools and village police. The Act also empowers Government to appoint members of the Union Boards as benches and courts for the trial of petty criminal and civil cases arising in the union or group of villages. In 1922 an Act on similar lines the Village Administration Act was passed in Bihar and Orissa.

**The Bengal Municipal Act, 1884** —Local self government had been introduced in urban areas many years before it was extended to the districts. Municipal government outside Calcutta may be said to have been inaugurated by an Act passed in 1808 authorizing Government to appoint Municipal Commissioners in any town with power to raise rates for municipal purposes. This was followed in 1876 by a larger measure providing for four stages of urban development viz two classes of municipalities and petty townships which were called unions and stations. In 1884 the Bengal Municipal Act abolished the classification of municipalities and placed all under a uniform law while the unions and stations were dealt with with. At the same time the elective system was introduced in the majority of the municipalities which were given the

right to elect two-thirds of the Commissioners. Some were also allowed to elect their Chairmen, a privilege which has since been extended to all but a few backward or badly administered towns.

It is unfortunately impossible to give as favourable an account of the subsequent progress of the municipalities as of the District Boards. A resolution issued by the Bengal Ministry of Local Self-Government in 1923, after stating that the average amount of rates and taxes paid annually by each ratepayer is only Rs 17¼ (in English money £1-3) says that approximation to English standards in the supply of municipal needs and amenities cannot be attained until the widespread aversion to higher taxation is overcome. "The deadening weight of poverty tends to crush out all enthusiasm and enterprise in these *mufassal* towns. Schemes, which are broached with some eagerness and worked out in industrious detail, are indefinitely postponed and finally cease to possess interest or to generate hopes. And disappointment of this kind produces in the end apathy and stagnation. Where the income yields just sufficient rupees to pay the sweepers, mend the roads and provide oil for a few street

lamps the administration becomes a matter of dull routine and it is not strange if it fails to arouse public spirit or produce civic pride. When these municipalities pass from hard penury to more comfortable budgeting a spirit of greater enterprise may colour and inform their work. It is however by no means certain that the general public within any measurable time will be prepared to pay the price and so long as the fear of increased taxation continues to be the common meeting ground of progressive and reactionary municipal administration must be dreary unevent

were appointed by him on the nomination of the Calcutta Corporation, groups of rural municipalities in different divisions, the District Boards, the chief mercantile associations and the Senate of the Calcutta University. As the nominations were accepted as a matter of course, this practically meant election by special constituencies under the disguise of nominations. At the same time the functions of the Council were enlarged by its being given the right of discussing, though not of voting upon, the annual budget and also the right of interpellation, *i e*, of asking questions on matters of public concern.

**The famine of 1896-97.**—Famine occurred in 1896-97 as the result of a failure of the monsoon rains in 1896 following on a partial failure of the crops in the previous year. The famine was most severely felt in North Bihar, and some districts in Chota Nagpur were also seriously affected. The number on relief works rose to 402,000 in May 1897, when also 426,000 persons were in receipt of gratuitous relief. Distress diminished with a favourable monsoon, and relief operations were brought to a close in September and October 1897.



Not only was there no mortality due to starvation but the death rate was actually below the normal except in some parts of Chota Nagpur. Though the extent and intensity of the famine were much the same as in 1873-74 the cost of relief operations to the State was only a little over a crore of rupees or one sixth of that incurred in the previous famine. This was largely the result of improved methods of famine administration and the spread of communications particularly of railways. It was also due to factors which make this famine of special interest *viz.* the improvement in the general condition of the people an advance in material prosperity greater resources and saving power.

In Bihar which bore the brunt of the famine the crops failed more completely the population was denser with but little increase in the area under cultivation and prices reached a higher level than in 1873-74 but the number requiring relief was much smaller. Three fifth of those requiring relief from Government belonged to the districts of Munshiganj and Duhanganj but they amounted to less than 10 per cent of the population whereas in 1873-74 the people of

those two districts had so few resources, were so poor and unable to withstand the effects of a single season's crop failure, that one-third of the population was at one time in receipt of relief from Government

### **Comparison with the famine of 1770.—**

It will be apposite to quote here an interesting comparison of this famine with that of 1770 which was given by Mr L P Shirres in a memorandum on the material condition of the people of Bengal during the decade ending 1901-02 "The famine of 1896-97," he wrote, "marks the close of the era of famines in Bengal, in the sense in which the word famine has hitherto been understood, and the commencement of an era of poor relief. The Famine Commission of 1880 refers to the steps by which the various States of Europe have passed from a condition of frequently recurring famines, such as that which now characterizes India, to one in which, though high prices are at times inevitable, actual famine due to the absence of food may be said to be unknown Bengal has passed from the less civilized to the more civilized economic stage, but the fact is obscured by our using the same word to designate the occurrences of 1770 and 1897

The descriptions of the former famines are too harrowing to quote and it must suffice to say that at least five and more probably ten millions of persons perished in Bengal from want of food. Food enough to feed the people could not be bought in the country for money and could not be imported in time to save them. In the latter year food sufficient for all was available so that Government had only to give work or money to those who had not wherewithal to buy it and the total number of persons in receipt of relief in Bengal was no more than a fraction of the number who receive relief in a normal year in England and Wales. The result was primarily due to the improvement in communications which had been effected either as part of the general progress of administration or by special measures for the express purpose of averting famine for there is always food enough in the country to feed the people if it can be transported in time to the place where it is wanted. The circumstances which caused the scarcity of 1897 would a century earlier have led to a grievous famine and although that year was withstood with a little difficulty it may be confidently asserted that never again will Bengal

devastated by one of those awful calamities which a century ago were called famines ”

**Epidemics of plague.**—Bubonic plague, which broke out in Bombay in 1896, spread to Bengal in 1898 and since then has been almost an annual visitation, which has caused heavy mortality. The number of deaths reported as due to it in the decade 1901—10 alone was over half a million, and owing to the imperfect agency for reporting vital statistics it is certain that the actual mortality was far higher. Bihar has been most subject to epidemics of plague and most of the deaths have occurred among its population, while Bengal, and more particularly Eastern Bengal, has been almost immune from its attacks. The explanation appears to be that the plague is spread by the rat flea and that the rats, in which it harbours, infest the mud-walled closely packed houses of the Bihar villages and do not find a congenial home in the villages of Bengal, where the houses are mostly scattered or detached and have walls made of brick or bamboo or wattle, added to which, the number of rats is kept down by annual floods which inundate the country in Eastern Bengal.

Plague it may be added, is no new visitation in India. There are known<sup>d</sup> to have been outbreaks at different times since the fifteenth century and a Muhammadan historian describing an epidemic which occurred in 1610 gives a graphic description of the way in which rats left their holes and died, and how the people saved their lives by evacuating their houses otherwise the inhabitants of the whole village would 'be swept away by the hand of death

**Territorial and constitutional changes —**  
In the next chapter an account will be given of the partitions of Bengal. Here it must suffice to say that in 1905 the province of Bengal as hitherto constituted was divided into two. North and Eastern Bengal were joined with Assam to form a separate province under the name of Eastern Bengal and Assam while the remainder of Bengal was made into a second province retaining the name of Bengal. Both provinces were administered by Lieutenant Governors but the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal was assisted from 1909 by an Executive Council. In 1912 there was a repartition. North and Eastern Bengal were reunited to West and

Central Bengal and formed a homogeneous province under a Governor-in-Council, while Bihar, Chota Nagpur and Orissa constituted a separate province under a Lieutenant-Governor with an Executive Council

Before this repartition took place the people had been given a larger share in the government of the country by what are known as the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909, so-called after the then Viceroy, Lord Minto, and the Secretary of State, Lord Morley. So far as provincial administration is concerned the most important features of these reforms, which are more fully described in Chapter XVIII, were that an Indian was appointed a member of the Executive Council in Bengal, while the Legislative Council had a majority of non-official members, was enlarged and was given fuller powers

**Economic changes.**—During the last thirty years of the period covered by the administration of the Lieutenant-Governors the country was in a state of economic transition chiefly characterized by an expansion of foreign trade, an outburst of mining and manufacturing activity, a general increase of prices and a rise in the standard of living.

Calcutta and its neighbourhood began to assume the character of a modern manufacturing district with large industrial works run by machinery and employing a great labour force. The development of the jute industry in particular was remarkable. In 1881 there were 19 jute mills with 34 000 operatives; in 1911 the figures were 58 and 200 000 respectively while the capital invested was £13 000 000 and the value of the products Rs 30 crores. Incidentally this meant the distribution of large sums among the agriculturists growing the jute crop, even after deducting the large proportion retained by middlemen. It was estimated that in one year when the fibre commanded a high price Rs 40 crores of rupees were paid for the season's crop and that of this total Rs 15½ crores were clear profit.

The development of the coal fields of Raniganj, Jharia and Giridih was little less extraordinary. For the output in the 20 years ending in 1911 rose from 1½ million tons to close on 11 million tons or 95 per cent. of the total production of India and the number of employes from 25 000 to nearly 100 000. The tea industry with 100 000 employes flourished but on the other hand the indigo

industry, after a life of over a century, was practically killed by the competition of the synthetic dye made in Germany

The progress of the more important manufactures, organised on a capitalist basis and for the most part owned by limited liability companies, owed their development to European enterprise and direction, but Indians, though slow to start or take shares in joint stock companies, were well to the front in other branches of industry and monopolized or almost monopolized some, such as rice mills, oil mills, boot and shoe factories, timber yards and brick and tile manufacture. Village handicrafts, faced with the competition of machinery, were either stationary or decadent in spite of a temporary stimulus from the *Swadeshi* movement, which was instituted, in connection with the agitation over the Partition of Bengal in 1905, to revive and foster indigenous industries. With a few exceptions, however, these industries had, for generations past, merely served local needs and were manned only by village artisans who supplied the simple demands of their neighbours. Industrial centres were still comparatively few, for large manufactures were mainly concentrated in Calcutta



and its neighbourhood. The village remained the chief unit of economic life the vast majority of the people continued to be dependent on agriculture for the means of living and agriculture continued to be petty i.e. the country was parcelled out in small holdings and not in large farms.

Even the labour force employed in the large manufactures was still largely agricultural and its work periodic rather than permanent. It retained a bond with the villages and ancestral fields to which it returned at regular intervals. As stated by a Factory Labour Commission in 1908 "The habits of the Indian factory operatives are determined by the fact that he is primarily an agriculturist or labourer on the land. In almost all cases his hereditary occupation is agriculture his home is in the village from which he comes not in the city in which he labours his wife and family ordinarily continue to live in that village he regularly remits a portion of his wages there and he returns there periodically. There is yet practically no factory population such as exists in European countries consisting of a large number of operatives trained from their youth to one

particular class of work and dependent upon employment at that work for their livelihood ”

Still a start has been made with modern industrial conditions resembling those of Europe, with capitalist production, the extensive use of machinery and large aggregations of labour. The organization of trade unions and strikes, which are a usual incident of those conditions, began to be in evidence after 1905. At first many of the unions were established and strikes started for political purposes. Professional agitators appeared, often impecunious Bengali lawyers, who made it their business to found and preside over unions and to foment strikes, with the object of embittering the relations of European employers and Indian employés and creating a spirit of unrest. But this was not the only factor at work. There were also grievances over the conditions and wages of labour, especially where the rise of wages had not kept pace with the rise of prices. Nor were the strikes, though a new feature in industrial life, confined to Indians. In 1907, for instance, there was a general strike among the European and Eurasian drivers and guards of the East Indian Railway, as a result of

which over 5,000 passengers had the unpleasant experience of being held up in the railway station at Asansol

The attraction of labour to manufacturing centres was especially facilitated by the opening of new lines of railway after 1890. Before that year Bengal had direct railway communication with the north west of India but not with Madras, Assam or the Central Provinces. The cheapness and ease with which industrial centres could be reached were largely instrumental in giving a new mobility to labour in helping to divert it from agriculture to industries and so encroaching on the monopoly of agricultural life. It also tended largely to change the personnel of the labour force in Bengal in which Bengalis began to be supplanted by workmen from other parts of India. This was notably the case in the jute mills where previously the hands were Bengalis. Their places were now taken to an increasing extent by immigrants from Bihar and the United and Central Provinces.

Another important economic factor was the increase in the general level of prices and consequent rise in the cost of living. This

was no new feature. There was a continuous upward tendency throughout the nineteenth century, which may be illustrated by the price of common rice, the staple of Bengal, from 1861 to 1901 statistics for earlier years are not available. Taking the price current in the first decade as the index number of 100, the average prices in the next three decades may be represented by the figures 120, 127 and 175. The process was accelerated in the beginning of the twentieth century, but as communications extended and trade became more closely organized, it was accompanied by an equalizing or levelling process, *i.e.*, there were not the same variations from year to year or from place to place. The rise of prices undoubtedly hit some classes hard, especially the middle classes engaged in professional pursuits, whose income did not increase in proportion to the rise of prices, while competition was rendered keener by the wider diffusion of higher education. In 1911 only one-seventh of the male population in Bengal and one-thirteenth in Bihar and Orissa could read and write, but higher education had made remarkable progress among the middle classes so that there was a small but well

educated minority struggling for a limited number of posts. The masses, being agriculturists, benefited from the increased prices which the surplus produce of their fields commanded. With a larger margin to fall back upon a small but distinct rise in the standard of living was perceptible.

It must not be imagined that a new era of prosperity set in. The immemorial problem of improvidence and indebtedness remained. Agriculture in Bengal, as elsewhere in India is dependent on credit and credit is supplied by money lenders, often themselves agriculturists whose rates of interests are generally usurious. The problem of agricultural indebtedness of enabling the cultivator to obtain the advances he requires without involving himself in a crushing burden of debt was first tackled by the establishment of co-operative societies by Government. Legislation for their constitution and control was undertaken in 1904 when the Viceroy (Lord Curzon) explained its objects in the words "The promotion of agricultural enterprise by an increase in the available capital may be described as a prime duty of any Government administering a large rural population. We are initiating

an experiment which is to make the cultivating classes themselves the borrowers, improving their credit, developing their thrift and training them to utilize for their own benefit the great advantage which the experience of other countries has shown to lie in the principle of mutual co-operation '' The experiment has been, on the whole, a success The co-operative movement has grown like the traditional mustard tree, and though still in the early stages of growth, bids fair, in course of time, to ameliorate agricultural economy

## CHAPTER XVII

### The Partitions of Bengal

**The Partition of 1905** —In 1873 the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal Sir George Campbell declared that it was totally impossible that any man could perform properly single-handed the work of the great Government of Bengal. At that time the population of the province which still included Assam was 67 000 000 and relief was sought by detaching Assam and making it a separate administration. Thirty years later the population of Bengal had grown to 78 millions and exceeded that of the United States of America while its area (106 000 square miles) was little less than that of France or the German Empire. Not only had there been enormous growth of population but with the development of the resources of the country the spread of trade and manufactures the diffusion of education and the growth of political consciousness the work of administration had become more complex. The conditions complained of in 1873 re-occurred if as may be doubted they had ever disappeared. The mischief was not

merely that the burden of responsibility laid on the Lieutenant-Governor was greater than he could properly discharge, but that the machinery of government being unequal to its task, the standards of administration suffered, and some parts of the province, notably Eastern Bengal, were neglected and backward

Some change was a pressing necessity, and the Government of India sought it not in any alteration of the form of government, but in a redistribution of territories. The scheme originally proposed by Lord Curzon's Government, which was published at the end of 1903, contemplated the transfer from Bengal of large slices of territory and the addition of others, *viz* — (1) the transfer to Assam of the Chittagong Division, the districts of Dacca and Mymensingh and the State of Hill Tippera (now Tripura), and to the Central Provinces of the greater part of Chota Nagpur, and (2) the addition to Bengal of the Sambalpur district and five feudatory States from the Central Provinces and of the Ganjam district and the Ganjam and Vizagapatam Agency Tracts from Madras. This scheme met with much opposition, and as a result of the discussion it received



and the expression of public opinion it evoked, the Government of India evolved an entirely different scheme, which was sanctioned by the Secretary of State, announced in July 1905 and carried into effect in October 1905.

This scheme is known as the Partition of Bengal both because the old province of Bengal was divided between two new provinces and also because the area inhabited by the Bengalis hitherto known as Bengal proper was brought under two different Governments. One of the two new provinces retained the name of Bengal with its capital at Calcutta the other was called Eastern Bengal and Assam and had its capital at Dacca. In the latter were grouped together Assam and the districts forming the east and north of Bengal proper viz those included in the Dacca Chittagong and Rajshahi divisions (except Darjeeling) the district of Malda and the State of Hill Tippera (now Tripura). This province had an area of 112 000 square miles and a population of 31 000 000 persons of whom all but six millions were inhabitants of the Bengal districts. The machinery of Government already existing in Bengal was duplicated for the new province of Eastern

Bengal and Assam, *i e* , it had a Lieutenant-Governor, Legislative Council, Board of Revenue, etc , and it remained under the jurisdiction of the Calcutta High Court. The new province of Bengal included all the remainder of the old province of Bengal with the exception of five States (Jashpur, Surguja, Udaipur, Korea and Chang Bhakar), which were transferred to the Central Provinces, and with the addition of the district of Sambalpur and the five States of Patna, Kalahandi, Sonpur, Bamra and Rairakhol, which had hitherto been part of the Central Provinces. Bengal as thus constituted had an area of 149,000 square miles and a population of 55 millions. Sir Bamfylde Fuller, who had been Chief Commissioner of Assam since 1902, became the first Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Sir Andrew Fraser, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal since 1903, continued to hold that office in the reduced province of Bengal.

**The agitation against the Partition.**—The announcement of the Partition was the signal for an agitation for which there was no parallel in the previous history of Bengal. The agitation was practically confined to the

Bengali Hindus The interests and sentiments of the people of Bihar Chota Nagpur and Orissa were not affected by the change, and the Bengali Muhammadans stood to gain by it for the greater number were inhabitants of Eastern Bengal and Assam where they formed a majority of the population and might expect to exercise an influence proportionate to their numbers In the first instance the agitation was largely factitious in the sense that it was carefully engineered An official account published in 1908 indeed says that the whole agitation clearly showed the tyranny of the professional wire puller the organization of a system under which a particular set of opinions expressed in practically the same words was sent out with a mandate from Calcutta directing that they should be repeated in the form of telegraphic protests and formal memorials from a number of different places in Bengal There is no doubt that there was wire pulling—it is a common incident of political agitation—there is equally no doubt that there was a genuine feeling to which it appealed and which intensified and widely extended The agitation grew in force and volume after the Partition was carried into effect but abated

some extent after December 1905, when a Liberal Ministry came into power in England with Mr (afterwards Lord) Morley as Secretary of State for India, who, it was hoped, would annul the measure. This hope proved vain, for Lord Morley declared that the Partition was to be treated as 'a settled fact, and agitation broke out again with renewed vigour.

The reasons for the opposition to the Partition were many and various. First, there was national sentiment, the feeling that the dismemberment of the province, by placing the Bengalis under two different administrations, was a blow to national unity and strength. There was a resentful feeling that the Bengalis of Eastern Bengal were being cut off from Calcutta, the centre of the intellectual, commercial and social life of the Bengalis, for which the remote and hitherto backward city of Dacca was substituted. There was a suspicion that the Partition was another move in a mysterious plot to undermine Bengali influence, for the Universities Act passed by Lord Curzon's Government in 1904, which remodelled the constitution of

the Calcutta University, had been misconstrued as an insidious attempt to curtail Bengali control of higher education and even to prevent its diffusion and so cripple the advancement of Bengalis. Added to this, certain vested interests suffered from the administrative changes and there was the fear that in the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam Muhammadan interests would predominate to the prejudice of the Hindus. An impression also existed that the order for partition was an autocratic ukase issued regardless of public opinion and without proper consultation of it. This was not true. The proposal to detach part of Eastern Bengal and unite it with Assam had been published 18 months before a final decision was come to and the public were habituated to the idea of partition but the separation of such a large area North Bengal as well as Eastern Bengal undoubtedly came as a surprise. Lastly those who were hostile to British rule joined in the agitation as a convenient means of attacking and embarrassing the Government.

**Methods of agitation** —The agitation took many forms—public meetings, processions

conferences, resolutions, memorials, pamphlets, etc. A striking demonstration took place on 16th October 1905, the day on which the Partition took effect. It was observed in Calcutta and other places as a day of mourning. A large part of the population fasted and went bare-footed, shops were shut—a move repeated in the *hartals* enforced in later years by the non-co-operation movement, in Calcutta itself the whole supply of fish was cut off. A ceremony called *rakhibandan* was observed, *i e*, yellow threads were bound round the arms of the demonstrators as a symbol of brotherhood, and a solemn vow, which was repeated on subsequent anniversaries of the day, was taken that the Bengalis would do everything in their power to counteract the evil effects of the dismemberment of the province and to maintain the integrity of their race. A direct appeal was made to the sentiment of national unity, which was strengthened by the agitation. The chief weapons, however, on which the opposition relied were the boycott of British goods and the *Swadeshi* movement.

**The Swadeshi movement.**—The object of both was the same, *viz*, to substitute home-made for imported goods in the markets

Originally the underlying idea was that the interests of British manufacturers might be so affected that they would bring pressure to bear on the Government to annul the obnoxious measure. As time went on racial animosity was the dominating factor. The *Swadeshi* movement was in itself laudable enough. It aimed at encouraging indigenous industries and did good work in that direction. But its effect was short lived for small industries, without combination or capital failed to compete successfully with large organized manufactures. The work of reconstructing or building up home industries was in any case slow and laborious and the agitators concentrated their energies on enforcing the boycott which seemed to promise speedier results.

**The boycott** —The idea of a boycott of British goods may have been borrowed from the Irish or from the Chinese who in May 1905 boycotted American imports as a protest against an exclusion treaty proposed by the United States. Whatever its origin it failed owing to the absence of a supply of home made goods to take the place of imported products and also because of the greater cheapness or

superiority of the latter. Its failure served a good purpose in later years, for the Bengalis, taught by past experience, turned a deaf ear to the suggestion that there should be a boycott of European goods to support the non-co-operation movement. Before, however, it came to an end it had done great mischief, more particularly in Eastern Bengal.

In order to make the boycott effective, the methods of persuasion were employed but rarely. Intimidation and coercion were generally resorted to. Notices were posted or letters sent threatening buyers and sellers of British goods with murder, arson and other outrages. Those who refused to fall into line were often exposed to social ostracism—a terrible means of persecution and punishment in the social constitution of Indian life. Open violence and force were employed. Markets were picketed to prevent the sale of imported goods, men who sold or bought them were subjected to assault. Peaceful cultivators were unable to obtain goods at the prices they could afford to pay, loss was caused to shopkeepers, who were not allowed to pursue their lawful trade. The Muhammadans, who had no sympathy with



the movement suffered most and were not above making reprisals. Riots occurred in which they attacked and plundered the Hindus and the relations between the two communities were seriously embittered.

In the end the people grew sick and resentful of the annoyance and even actual suffering caused by the boycott. The agitators themselves began to realize that it was not an effective political weapon and did more harm than good to their cause but this was not till after it had been persisted in for some years. In an address delivered to the Legislative Council of Eastern Bengal and Assam in 1910 the Lieutenant Governor Sir Lancelot Hare declared "The boycott agitation ~~has~~ been the curse of this province for the last few years causing endless suffering and unrest obstructing the path of progress exciting ill feeling between Government and the people and hindering their co-operation in the work of reconstruction and reform. The agitation has displayed itself in many evil forms all tending to oppression and lawlessness."

"Bande Mataram" — A kind of slogan for the movement was found by the adoption of the phrase *Bande Mataram* meaning

literally, "Hail, Mother" These opening words, and also the refrain, come in a romantic novel, *Ananda Math*, famous Bengali novelist, Bankim Chatterji which was first published in 1882. The novel relates that a number of Hindus banded themselves together in the latter part of the eighteenth century by an oath to lead a life of stern self-denial until they liberated the country from the rule of the Muhammadans. They defeated the forces sent against them and eventually submitted to British rule, which was being established, in the belief that this was necessary for national regeneration. One of their exploits was the rout of a party of British troops under a British commander, which was a great treasure to Calcutta. In the moment of triumph their leader broke into the *Mataram* song. This is a lyric of patriotic fervour, which acclaims Bengal's mother (or motherland), extols her beauty and fertility—her never-failing rivers, her verdant trees, her fields green unto harvest. It proclaims her power and greatness, and calls seventy million throats to shout against her foes and twice seventy arms to defend her.

The song itself became a kind of national anthem and the words *Bande Mataram* were used to express patriotic fervour or aggressive hostility to the British according to the occasion and the spirit of those who used them. In the former sense a parallel may be found in

"Rule Britannia" and "Hail Columbia," both extracts from popular song or verse. Many gave the expression a wider meaning applying it to India and not Bengal only, as the motherland.

**Appeals to religious sentiment**—The song *Bande Mataram* has an under-current of religious ecstasy the Mother being greeted as Durga as Lakshmi and as Saraswati. The words *Bande Mataram* might therefore be used as an invocation of any of these goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. And there is no doubt that the agitators made it part of their policy to give a religious sanction to the movement to link it with the adoration of Kali and strengthen it by appealing to Hindu religious sentiment. Meetings were held in Kali temples, vows to boycott British goods were made in her name. Rumours were even spread that the blood and bones of pigs and cows were used to purify European salt and

sugar, and that their fat formed part of the starch used for English cotton piece-goods

### **Change in the character of the agitation.—**

As time went on, the movement got beyond the control of those who were merely opposed to the Partition of Bengal. There were developments which they had never contemplated they had sown the wind and reaped the whirlwind. Those who joined in the agitation with the sinister motive of weakening and, if possible, subverting British rule threw off the mask. The annulment of the Partition became a secondary consideration, and a revolutionary spirit came to the front. In particular, the student class, to which the agitators had made a special appeal, was infected with a spirit of lawlessness and defiance of constituted authority. The services of students were largely used for meetings, for processions and for picketing shops and markets in enforcement of the boycott. In 1906 Sir Bamfylde Fuller, the first Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, resigned his office in consequence of a difference of opinion with the Government of India as to the policy to be pursued in order to prevent colleges and schools being exploited

for political purposes the Government of India refused to follow his advice and disaffiliated two institutions which were suspected of being homes of seditious propaganda.

After this the infection of the students became worse. *Inter alia* they were formed into bands called National Volunteers with the idea that they would be able if necessary, to resist force with force. These bodies did good work in social service during floods, for instance in assisting pilgrims at great festivals but such altruistic work was only occasional and their main objects and purposes were political. In 1904 Dr (later Sir) Asutosh Mukharji as Vice Chancellor of the Calcutta University addressing Convocation found it necessary to sound a solemn note of warning as to the danger. 'The most strenuous efforts', he declared 'must be made by all persons truly interested in the future of the rising generation to protect our youths from the hands of irresponsible men who recklessly seek to seduce our students from the path of academic life and to plant in their immature minds the poisonous seeds of hatred against a constituted government.'

A fuller account of the later phases of the movement is given in the next chapter. Here it will be necessary to mention only the administrative measure by which the Partition of 1905 was annulled and a repartition effected.

**The repartition of 1912.**—In the hope of allaying unrest a repartition was carried out in 1912, by which Assam reverted to a separate administration under a Chief Commissioner and a new province of Bengal was constituted, comprising the whole of the Bengali-speaking area in the two provinces together with the district of Darjeeling. The new province was made a Presidency (with the archaic designation of the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal) under a Governor-in-Council, *i e*, a Governor assisted by an Executive Council of three members, of whom one was a Bengali non-official gentleman. The change was welcomed with enthusiasm by the Bengali Hindus throughout Bengal. It was resented as a breach of faith by the Muhammadans of Eastern Bengal and Assam, who, relying on the declaration of Lord Morley that the Partition was a settled fact, looked forward to

holding in that province a dominating position corresponding to their numerical superiority

Bihar Chota Nagpur and Orissa were combined in another province called Bihar and Orissa with a capital at Patna which was placed under a Lieutenant Governor in Council as in Bengal the Executive Council consisted of three members of whom one was an Indian non-official Lord Carmichael was the first Governor of Bengal and Sir Charles Bayley the Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam was translated to Bihar and Orissa

At the same time Delhi was made the capital of British India in place of Calcutta. The idea of transferring the capital to Delhi was mooted after the Mutiny of 1857, but had long been dropped. The decision that the Government of India should move from Calcutta to Delhi which was made without previous consultation of public opinion came as a general surprise. It was an autocratic measure which is aptly described by Mr Montagu and Lord Chelmsford in their *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms* as "a striking manifestation of the powers of State."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### Unrest and Reforms, 1858—1909.

**Conditions after 1858.**—It has been said that revolutions are caused less by specific grievances than by the descent, from the forum to the market place, of generalizations and revolutionary dogmas by political thinkers in a society which is expanding intellectually and growing in material prosperity. During the half century which followed the Mutiny, India, pacified and prosperous, pursued a career of material prosperity and intellectual expansion, accompanied by a growing restiveness under British rule. The leaven of new ideas was at work, resulting in a growing sense of political consciousness among the educated classes. The outcome of the ferment was an increasingly insistent demand for a fuller share in the government of the country.

Nor is this to be wondered at. It was scarcely to be expected that all classes would be entirely unanimous in their consent to be governed by a foreign race. The contrary was proved during the Mutiny of 1857,



High Court downwards until the administration in all but the higher branches was mainly manned by Indians. A grievance however, remained in the paucity of Indians who obtained admission to the highest of the administrative services the Indian Civil Service. Owing to the fact that the competitive examination regulating admission was held only in England the number of Indians who could compete was necessarily limited. There was in fact no equality of opportunity with British candidates and up to 1870 only one Indian had become a member of the service. The politically minded Indians however claimed more than a larger share in the agency of administration. Their ambition was to have a voice in the government itself and to control its policy. The sense of political disabilities became a grievance which was resented more and more as time went on. The fathers had eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth were set on edge."

In connection with the political effect of the spread of English education it should be mentioned that the possession of a common language by men of different nationalities helped to produce political solidarity to an

extent which would have been impossible earlier in the nineteenth century when the provinces of India was divided by languages as well as other lines of cleavage. English was the *lingua franca* of the intellectual classes, and it made united political action possible. The political movement thus assumed unity of aim and control and was not merely provincial—a factor which must be borne in mind in a local history of this kind.

Another feature of the spread of education which calls for notice is the discontent, produced by its academic character. Even before 1878 the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir Richard Temple, found occasion to notice the discontent and restlessness perceptible in the rising generation as a result of higher education failing to give a training for any avocations but the Bar and Government service. After years of arduous study, too many found that they could obtain neither practice at the Bar nor posts under Government, and that they were not qualified for other branches of life. The education imparted to them was, if not in advance of,

at least unsuited to the economic and industrial development of the country, and disappointment with its results was fuel for the fire of political agitation

The system of education did not improve. Twenty years later i.e. in 1898 the then Lieutenant Governor Sir Alexander Mackenzie denounced it as unsound in itself and the cause of a flood of seditious writing. 'We are', he said, 'turning out by thousands young men who are trained only in words, look mainly for Government employment and failing to get it become a host of discontented, disobedient and sometimes troublesome young men. This is the class that writes for the native press, perorates on platforms and generally vents its spleen upon the Government which has not been able to find employment for more than a fraction of its members. It can hardly be a matter for surprise that the educational system should be characterized (by Sir Alfred Wall) as a story of grave political miscalculation.

**Influence of the Press** — The influence of the press in fostering discontent with existing conditions was also strong

As early as 1922, Sir Thomas Munro had sounded a note of warning as to the possible effects of a free press on a government constituted like that of India. "A free press and the dominion of strangers," he declared, "are things which are quite incompatible and which cannot long exist together." Indian newspapers, he pointed out, were bound in time to have political tendencies. "They would soon learn to compare their own situation with ours and to overthrow our power." However this may be, the tone of the vernacular press fifty years later had become such as to call for Government control. Restraint was not necessary with regard to the English press, whether conducted by Europeans or Indians, for it showed a sense of responsibility and a spirit of temperate criticism. There was, however, an increasing number of newspapers published in the vernacular, which made it their object to excite antagonism to the British race and disaffection to the British rule.

With newspapers of this class liberty had degenerated into license, and appealing, as they did, to credulous readers wanting in political experience and balance of judgment, they were a dangerous influence. An

Act for the control of the vernacular press was passed in 1878 but remained on the statute book for only four years. Though it was designed to check license while leaving liberty, it was opposed by those with whom liberty of the press was a sacrosanct principle as well as by those with whom it was a convenient catch word. It was denounced among others by Mr Gladstone who was returned to power in England in 1880 and two years later it was repealed by Lord Ripon's Government. The tone of the vernacular press deteriorated with freedom from control and in 1898 the Government of India was confronted by the same problem as in 1878.

Though a large number of newspapers did good service both to Government and the governed by fearless and well informed criticism by pointing out abuses or grievances and by suggesting remedies a growing section of the press actively disseminated sedition. Its character may be judged by the remarks of Sir Griffith Evans in 1898: "A free press is an exotic in India and like plants and animal transplanted into new surroundings is liable to strange developments. For many years a portion of the

native press, and particularly of the vernacular press, has devoted itself to pouring forth a continual stream of calumny and abuse of the British Government in India and to teaching that all their misfortunes, poverties and miseries arise from a foreign Government, which draws away their wealth and is callous to their miseries, and from which they can expect neither justice nor sympathy." The remedy sought by the Government of India was not the enactment of a Press Act but amendment of the law of sedition, and section 124A was added to the Indian Penal Code in 1898

It is sometimes imagined that dislike of British domination is a new feature, but from this sketch of the tendencies of a growing section of the Press it will be apparent that for a whole generation it was engaged in creating an atmosphere of racial animosity and of hatred of the British Government

**The Ilbert Bill.**—Shortly after the repeal of the Vernacular Press Act racial passion and prejudice were aroused by the agitation over the Ilbert Bill. This was a Bill, introduced in 1883 on behalf of the Government

of India by Mr (afterwards Sir Courtenay) Ilbert then Legal Member, of which the object was to take from European British subjects the special privileges which they enjoyed in regard to criminal trials. Jurisdiction over those resident outside the Presidency towns could only be exercised by judicial officers who were themselves European British subjects. Those charged with criminal offences could not be tried by Indian magistrates. The latter were consequently under a judicial disqualification based on racial distinction which Lord Ripon's Government was anxious to remove. The Bill was hotly opposed by the European community and gave rise to a fierce agitation over the racial question. In the end Government abandoned its original proposal and though the law on the subject was amended, it left Europeans in a privileged position. Among those Indians who already were aggrieved by political disabilities a sense of disappointment and resentment was excited by the continuance of inequality between Europeans and their own countrymen.

The action of Lord Ripon's Government can be said to have done any particular

good either to Indians or to Europeans, while the controversy it created was productive of racial animosity and prejudice, among both Europeans and Indians, and embittered the relations between them. The feeling against Lord Ripon himself was so strong that some Europeans entered into a plot, to be executed if he persisted with the legislation in its original form, to rush Government House in Calcutta, take him prisoner, put him on board a steamer in the Hooghly and deport him to England *via* the Cape of Good Hope. The then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal declared—"Be it privilege or prejudice which the Englishman asserts here, there can be no question that amongst them the bare proposal to withdraw it has excited a fiercer and more perilous conflict of races than was witnessed after the mutiny of 1857, and so the work of 26 years, in which every true Englishman and native has welcomed the growth of a stronger mutual regard and toleration for each other, and in which a spirit of charity and forbearance was winning its way to a better understanding of each other's wants, has to be begun over again."



**The foundation of the Indian National Congress, 1885**—A new political development which took place soon afterwards was the foundation at the end of 1885 of the Indian National Congress an annual gathering unofficial in character of representatives throughout India of those Indians—still a small minority—who had given attention to public affairs. It has been held by some that the Congress was an outcome of the agitation over the Ilbert Bill which showed politically minded Indians the power which could be exercised by an organized minority and taught them the possibilities of agitation, but in any case the evolution of an organization to formulate and to press for the fulfilment of a political creed and programme was inevitable.

The declared object was to bring men of light and leading together to foster a public spirit to educate the people and familiarize them with the working of representative institutions and to demonstrate to the British Government that India was ripe for self government. Self government was not defined but in any case the claim at the time was a bold one considering the limited powers of the Local Native Councils and the paucity of

Indians serving on them, as well as the fact that a system of local self-government had only just been extended to rural areas with the idea, as stated in a resolution issued by Lord Ripon's Government in 1882, that it would be "an instrument of popular political education." At this stage the necessity for gradual advance was recognized by the Congress party, which aimed at paving the way to self-government by reforming the existing legislatures and making them more representative. It was also hoped that the Congress indirectly would form the germ of an Indian parliament. The Congress was inspired by a spirit of loyalty to British rule, the benefits of which were fully acknowledged, but it was accepted as a guiding principle that good government is no substitute for self-government—a sentiment which, at first sight, seems to neglect the conditions then existing in India, and which might have been discounted by Pope's saying that "Whate'er is best administered is best."

The Congress was instrumental in affording a training ground for Indian politicians, and in focussing and giving expression to

people over whom they ruled better than the people themselves but at the same time it was recognized that under the pacifying and unifying influence of British rule a peaceful revolution—it would perhaps be better to call it evolution—was in progress

This was clearly pointed out by the Viceroy Lord Lytton in 1878 The problem undertaken by the British rulers of India is the application of the most refined principles of European government and some of the most artificial institutions of European society to a vast Oriental population in whose history habits and traditions they have had no previous existence

It is a fact which there is no disguising and it is also one which cannot be too constantly or too anxiously recognized that by enforcing these principles and establishing these institutions we have placed and must permanently maintain ourselves at the head of a gigantic but gradual revolution—the greatest and most momentous social, moral and religious as well as political revolution which perhaps the world has ever witnessed

It was however felt that India was still too immature and political progress must be slow and gradual Conditions were

absolutely different from those prevailing in England with its homogeneous population schooled by centuries of constitutional progress. India was a land inhabited by many races with diverse customs and conflicting creeds. The mass of the people were ignorant of the alphabet of politics. All were without political experience, and comparatively few could read and write.

**The reforms of 1892.**—It was not till 1892 that further measures were taken for associating non-official Indians more closely with the task of government, partly as a response to the demand of the Congress for a larger voice in legislation. The Legislative Councils at this time were numerically small. The maximum number of members who could be appointed to the Legislative Council of India, in addition to the members of the Executive Council, was only twelve, of whom not less than half had by statutory law to be non-officials. The total number on the Bengal Legislative Council, besides the Lieutenant-Governor, was also only twelve. The functions of the Councils were confined to the consideration and passing of Bills, interpellations, resolutions and the discussion of the annual budget were outside their purview.

In 1858 Lord Dufferin's Government represented that the time had come for the enlargement of the Councils the multiplication of their functions the partial introduction of the elective system and generally the liberalization of their character as political institutions. In particular it urged the election of Indian gentlemen representative of different interests and classes so as to give the non official element a larger share in the administration of public affairs and strengthen the Government by bringing it into closer contact with public opinion and giving it a fuller knowledge of Indian views and aspirations. The Secretary of State Lord Cross vetoed the proposal for the introduction of the elective system as too advanced but on pressure from the Government of Lord Lansdowne who had in the meantime succeeded Lord Dufferin he consented to a revised proposal that members of the Legislative Councils should be appointed on the nomination of public bodies. As the nominations were accepted as a matter of course this practically meant election by special committees.

The reconstitution of the Bengal Legislative Council has been described in Chapter

XVI In the Governor-General's Legislative Council, there were ten non-official members out of a statutory maximum of 16 additional members. Four of these were appointed on the nomination of provincial Councils and one on the nomination of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, the remaining five seats were filled by direct appointment. The strength of the provincial Councils was increased, and the functions of all legislative bodies were enlarged by their being given the right of interpellation and of the discussion of the budget. These changes were effected by the Indian Councils Act of 1892.

### **Reaction against European influences.—**

Side by side with the political movement a spirit of reaction against European influences was gaining ground. In the early part of the nineteenth century there had been a general enthusiasm among the educated classes for European civilization and culture. So much was this the case that there was at one time a contempt for Bengali literature, and young writers sought to express themselves in English prose and verse rather than in the tongue of their country. For instance, the earlier works of the Bengali epic poet Madhu

Sudan Dutt, were all composed in English and it was not till he was 34 years of age that he abandoned English for Bengali. In the second half of the nineteenth century a reaction set in marked by a renaissance of Hinduism a revived pride in Indian philosophy literature and art and a growing aversion to Western ideals which were stigmatized as materialistic. The conviction grew that inspiration was to be found in the spiritual and literary treasures of India and that by adopting Western standards and beliefs India was selling her soul for a mess of unsavoury pottage.

In Northern India the working of this new spirit was manifested by the foundation by Dayanand Saraswati of the Arya Samaj a body which inculcates a belief in the Vedas as the only true revelation. Back to the Vedas became an article of faith with many. In Bengal the educated classes were attracted by the teaching of Swami Vivekananda who established the Ramkrishna Mission in 1897 and died five years later.

Then he announced "is the great ideal before us and every one must be ready for it the conquest of the whole world by India. We must conquer the world."

through our spirituality and philosophy. We must do it or die. The only condition of Indian national life, of unashamed and vigorous national life, is the conquest of the world by Indian thought." It came to be a cardinal tenet with many that the West was sunk in gross materialism and that India alone had a sense of spiritual values.

This belief was not without an important bearing on the trend of political thought. The impression gained ground among the intellectual classes that the exercise of control by the British was tantamount to an admission of their own inferiority. As forcibly expressed by Sir Valentine Chirol in *Indian Unrest* (1910)—"To imagine that Indian unrest has been a sudden growth because its outward manifestations have assumed new and startling forms of violence is a dangerous delusion, and no less misleading is the assumption that it is merely the outcome of Western education or the echo of Western democratic aspirations, because it occasionally, and chiefly for purposes of political expediency, adopts the language of Western demagogues. Whatever its modes of expression, its main-spring is a deep-rooted antagonism to all the principles upon which



Western society especially in a democratic country like England has been built up "

The effect of the Russo-Japanese war — ' No one observes Meredith Townsend in *Asia and Europe* " who has studied the question doubts that as there is a comity of Europe so there is a comity of Asia a disposition to believe that Asia belongs of right to Asiatics and that any event which brings that right nearer to realization is to all Asiatics a pleasurable one This feeling was enormously strengthened by the victory of Japan in the Russo Japanese war of 1904-05 The defeat of a first class European power by an Asiatic nation was an event of momentous importance The expansion of European nations in the East received its first check, the idea of European invincibility was shown to be a fallacy European prestige was discounted the idea of Asia for the Asiatics was given a new practical meaning

In India the defeat of Russia as crushing as it was unexpected made an impression all the deeper because of the formidable reputation Russia had hitherto enjoyed At the time of her advance towards India and the fear of her designs on the country—the

Russian bogey as it was called by sceptics—had been a commonplace of foreign politics. Her defeat seemed like the overthrow of an European Goliath by an Asiatic David, and appealed vividly to the imagination of all who thought of the future of India. A striking example of this is mentioned by Mr. C. F. Andrews in *The Renaissance in India*. The case was one of a young man whose thoughts and ambitions had centred in his family and his case. "Then came the great Russo-Japanese war, which set him thinking. He began to have a wider outlook. Day after day the news of fresh victories came from the Far East. At last he read of the complete overthrow of the Russian fleet in the Straits of Tsushima. That night, he told me, he was quite unable to sleep. The vision of his own country came to him in an almost objective form. She seemed to rise in front of him like a sad and desolate mother, claiming his love.

With overwhelming force he heard the call to give himself up for his motherland. He could think of nothing else."

In this and other cases a spirit of patriotism and devotion to India was aroused. The idea came to be entertained that India

might work out her own salvation and aspire to freedom from European tutelage, and this line of thought was strengthened by a section of the vernacular press, which drew the moral that following the example of the Japanese other Asiatics might have success in their struggle against European domination.

**Agitation after the Partition of Bengal —** The Partition of Bengal which took effect in October 1905 (less than five months after the annihilation of the Russian fleet in the Straits of Tsushima) was the signal for the outburst of a furious agitation. This has been described in the previous chapter, in which it has been stated that while some joined in it because they were aggrieved by the Partition as a blow to Bengali unity or to personal interests others saw and seized the opportunity for a campaign against the existing system of government. The former aiming at the redress of what they considered a grievance mostly favoured constitutional methods of agitation. The latter who were concerned merely with a local question like the Partition and were associated with conspirators elsewhere in India favoured at first a policy of violence as best

calculated to carry out their subversive objects. With them the Partition was the occasion rather than the cause of a movement which was both anti-British and revolutionary in character.

Their activity and organization made up for the paucity of their members, so that it was not long before they became the dominant party, and the question of the annulment or modification of the Partition became a minor issue, subordinated to the far larger issue of the maintenance of the existing system of government. The agitation until 1912 was general in Bengal, but in Bihar and Orissa affected only those towns in which there were settlements of Bengalis. It was practically confined, moreover, so far as this part of India was concerned, to the Bengali Hindus. Though a few Muhammadans joined in the agitation, they were not representative of the Muhammadan community, which not only kept aloof from it but strongly condemned it.

**Moderates and Extremists.**—By 1907 the politically minded section of the population—still a small minority—had become definitely divided into two parties called the

**Moderates and the Extremists** The Moderates advocated the attainment of a system of government similar to that enjoyed by the self governing members of the British Empire—in fact that India should have the status of one of the Dominions. This object was to be gained by constitutional reforms. It was recognized that the goal could not be reached immediately and that there must be a gradual advance. The Extremists believed that India must work out her own political salvation and attain independence. This object was to be gained not by the gradual evolution of constitutional reforms but by a speedy destruction of the existing system. Opposition to Government and its measures, was regarded by this party as the basis of its political creed. The actions of Government were suspected or condemned not on their merits but simply because they were the actions of an alien Government.

“ **Swaraj** ”—The term by which the Extremists at this time commonly expressed their aims was *Swaraj* meaning literally self government. It is a word which can bear two meanings as indeed was pointed out by the High Court of Calcutta before 1905.

in connection with criminal proceedings taken against a man who had advocated *Swaraj*. It may be interpreted as government by the people of India under British sovereignty—a kind of Home Rule within the British Empire. It may also mean government by Indians and for Indians in complete independence of the British Parliament and Empire. *Swaraj* was, for instance, explained by one of the papers started by the Extremists in 1906, which had to be suppressed by Government, as “the absolute right of self-taxation, self-legislation and self-administration for the people of India”

Many Moderates subsequently adopted the term as embodying their ideal of dominion status for India, and after the introduction of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms its use became general while its meanings remained various. On the one hand, those who desired the elimination of the British and secession from the British Empire could claim that *Swaraj* was their goal. On the other hand, it could be, and was, used in the very different sense of government by Indians within the Empire. The elusiveness of the term had its attractions for agitators, who could use

it to bring together advocates of different systems of government. The confusion has been added to by official use of the term. Thus we find a resolution of the Government of Bengal issued by the Ministry of Local Self government in 1923 stating that "all political parties in the country are in favour of *Swaraj* or self government while next year in the Legislative Assembly the Finance Member of the Government of India declared "To-day we are all *Swarajists*. We are all agreed as to the goal full responsible government for India within the Empire."

In recent times again the word has been used by Mr Gandhi in a kind of spiritual as well as a political sense his teaching being that true patriots must shake off the fetters that shackle their individual lives before they are fit for national freedom. One of his chief followers Mr C R Das announced in the Indian National Congress of 1922 that *Swaraj* is indefinable and is not to be confused with any particular form of government. Next year he pointed out that *Swaraj* might mean self realization of the Indian people of which political independence was only a part and it would not be wise to apply a hard and fast meaning to

word to which such comprehensive signification attached in the Indian mind

**The tone of the press.**—Of all the weapons used by the revolutionary Extremists none was so deadly as the printing press. The round had long been prepared by newspapers which had sown the seeds of disaffection. A whole generation had grown up under the influence of journals which spread disaffection either by open attack or covert insinuation. As already stated, after the repeal of the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 removed a restraining influence, a section of the Press grew more malignant and more seditious, until the penal law had to be strengthened in 1898, but in spite of this, misrepresentation and vilification of Government, and even overt sedition, went on headily.

In Bengal, as elsewhere in India, many newspapers were conducted with moderation and fairness, but on the other hand there were others widely read, which in season and out of season, fostered racial hatred of the British and disaffection towards the Government. The stock common-places of the journals of the latter class were that the British drained the country of its wealth, that



the Government was callous and indifferent to the welfare of India that justice was not administered impartially between Europeans and Indians that famine and poverty, and even diseases like plague and malaria were the consequences of British rule

The number and virulence of newspapers of this kind increased during the agitation started in 1905. Some even advocated the adoption of revolutionary methods as the means of securing political independence. Criminal proceedings failed to check much less stamp out the mischief. The law required only the registration of the printers of newspapers; editors and managers remained undetected in the background and the printer as often as not was a nonentity whom they used as a tool. In 1908 after the outrages mentioned in the next paragraph had occurred an Act was passed by which if any newspaper published incitements to murder or acts of violence or offences against the Explosives Act of the same year (i.e. bomb outrages or the preparation of bombs for their commission) Government was authorized to stop the issue of the newspaper concerned and to confiscate the printing press. Some of the more inflammatory

newspapers were suppressed under this Act, but its scope being limited, it failed to keep within bounds the flood of seditious propaganda, and an effectual check was only applied by the Press Act passed in 1910

The conditions which necessitated this enactment are sufficiently explained in the following remarks made by Sir Herbert Risley in introducing the Bill "Every day," he said, "the press proclaims, openly or by suggestion or allusion, that the only cure for the ills of India is independence from foreign rule, independence to be won by heroic deeds, self-sacrifice, martyrdom on the part of the young—in any case by some form of violence Hindu mythology, ancient and modern history, and more especially the European literature of revolution, are ransacked to furnish examples that justify revolt and proclaim its inevitable success The methods of guerilla warfare as practised in Circassia, Spain and South Africa, Mazzini's gospel of political assassination, Kossuth's most violent doctrines, the doings of Russian Nihilists, the murder of the Marquis Ito, the dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna in the *Gita*, a book that is to Hindus what the *Imitation of Christ* is to emotional Christians

—all these are pressed into the service of inflaming impressionable minds ”

**Revolutionary methods** —“ We are,” he went on to say at the present moment confronted with a murderous conspiracy whose aim it is to subvert the Government of the country and to make British rule impossible by establishing general terrorism. Their organization is effective and far reaching their numbers are believed to be considerable the leaders work in secret and are blindly obeyed by their youthful followers. The method they favour at present is political assassination—the method of Mazzini in his worst moods

of a small body of their own countrymen, and that civil disorder could easily be created. A spirit of indiscipline and sedition was bred among the younger generation, to whose nervous excitability the doctrines of freedom and nationalism preached by agitators proved a heady intoxicant rather than a healthy stimulant. Their passions were fanned and a fanatical fervour inspired which nerved even weaklings to desperate deeds.

**Revolutionary associations.**—They were organised in a number of associations called *Samitis*, which were seminaries of sedition and schools for the study of anarchical principles and methods. Of these the following account was given in the *Report of the Sedition Committee*, 1918: “The associates formed a body called the Anusilan Samiti (society for the promotion of culture and training). One of these societies was soon in working order at Calcutta, the capital of Western, and another at Dacca, the capital of Eastern Bengal. They extended their ramifications in all directions. At one time the Dacca society had 500 branches in towns and villages. Besides these societies other less

formal groups collected but all were inspired by the same seditious principles and united in creating an atmosphere which would swell their ranks and facilitate their operations. The atmosphere was to be created by 'building up' public opinion by means of newspapers, songs and literature, preaching, secret meetings and associations. Unrest must be created. Welcome therefore unrest whose historical name is revolt.

**Political and industrial unrest** —One of the early forms of activity consisted of stirring up industrial unrest. Between 1905 and 1907 agitators were busy among the workmen in large concerns in or near Calcutta which were managed by Government or by Europeans, such as printing presses, railways and jute mills. They formed so-called trade unions and fomented strikes not on account of any genuine grievances but for political motives, i.e. to embitter the relations between European owners or managers and as far as possible to weaken British authority.

Eastern Bengal, from which, said the Viceroy in the Indian Legislative Council in November 1907, came "a daily story of assault, of looting, of boycotting and general lawlessness, encouraged by agitators, who with an utter disregard for consequences, no matter how terrible, have, by public addresses, by seditious newspapers, by seditious leaflets, by itinerant secret agents, lost no opportunity of inflaming the worst racial feeling "

**Revolutionary outrages.**—At the end of 1907 the revolutionary party began to resort to more violent methods. According to one of its pamphlets, the terrorism of Government officials, European and Indian, would bring about the collapse of the machinery of Government. A campaign of separate assassinations was recommended, as the best conceivable method of paralyzing the bureaucracy, arousing the people and inaugurating the initial stage of a revolution. At the same time money for the prosecution of the campaign was to be obtained by the plunder of their defenceless countrymen, by what was known as political dacoity. For many years afterwards Bengal was the scene of "a series

of wilfully calculated crimes, of bomb outrages of dacoities committed against helpless people in faraway villages, of secret murders of assassinations of Indian police officers whose only fault was their courageous and undeviating loyalty." The weapons mostly used were revolvers and bombs. It did not, it was pointed out, require much muscle to shoot Europeans and bombs, usually charged with picric acid, were easily manufactured—some small bombs suitable for separate assassinations others large bombs which could be used for crowds or street fighting. The idea of obtaining assistance from the Indian army was also in the forefront of the revolutionaries' schemes and military works (*e.g.* Infantry Training Cavalry Drill Machine Gun Training Rifle Exercises and Field Exercises) were studied by members of their societies with a view to future developments.

Before the end of 1907 plots were hatched to blow up trains in which the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal Sir Andrew Fraser travelled. In December one train was derailed by a bomb which blew a hole in the pavement five feet in depth and of the same width. In the same month Mr. Allen

who had been District Magistrate at Dacca, was shot in the back at the railway station of Goalundo and narrowly escaped with his life. Early in April 1908 an unsuccessful attempt was made to murder with a bomb the French Maire of Chandernagore, who had excited resentment by some of his measures. On the last day of that month two English ladies at Muzaffarpur, Mrs and Miss Kennedy, were killed with a bomb intended for the District Judge, Mr Kingsford, who as Chief Presidency Magistrate at Calcutta had convicted some printers of seditious newspapers. One of the murderers was executed, the other escaped by committing suicide on arrest. This was the second attempt on the life of Mr Kingsford. A parcel had been sent to him containing a book in the cover of which was an infernal machine, so designed that it would explode as soon as the book was opened. Fortunately Mr Kingsford did not open the parcel, thinking it was merely a book which he had lent, and it remained unopened till the police obtained information of its existence.

A secret manufactory of bombs and explosives in the outskirts of Calcutta was discovered and raided by the police in May



1908 and a number of conspirators were arrested and put on trial in what was called the Alipore conspiracy case. Their arrest appears for a time to have upset the plans of the revolutionary party, but not for long. A bomb intended for the destruction of a tram car was exploded by a municipal cart in Calcutta and between June 1908 and April 1909 bombs were thrown at trains near Calcutta on four different occasions only once with serious results.

A vendetta now commenced against those who unearthed or exposed the conspirators' plans. In August 1908 an approver was murdered in the Alipore Jail by two prisoners who were under trial for conspiracy. In September a police sub-inspector who had arrested one of the murderers of Mrs. and Miss Kennedy was shot dead in a lane in Calcutta; this was only the first of a number of retaliatory murders of policemen. In November 1908 a determined attempt was made to murder Sir Andrew Fraser while attending a public meeting in Calcutta. As he was walking up to the platform a young Bengali rushed forward with a loaded revolver. Sir Rajiv Chand Mahtab, Maharajallal Dasgupta Bahadur of Burdwan, with cool

courage interposed himself between Sir Andrew Fraser and the assassin, who was only a few paces away and twice pulled the trigger but providentially the revolver missed fire each time.

**Political dacoities.**—At the same time a number of dacoities were committed to supply the party with funds. They were justified by its leaders on the ground that the party was working for the good of India, and that it was right to collect money for that purpose. It was argued that if money was not subscribed voluntarily, it must be exacted by force that theft and dacoity were crimes because they were against the social good, but not political dacoity because those who committed it were aiming at promoting that good. These dacoities were also known as *bhadra lok* dacoities, because they were committed by members of the educated middle class, who in Bengal are known as *bhadra lok*, the nearest equivalent in English is perhaps gentlemen robberies.

The dacoits were commonly armed with revolvers and their depredations showed careful preparation and organization, *e g*, the

members observed a certain discipline, obeying orders conveyed by whistles or bugles telegraph wires were cut to prevent timely news of a dacoity reaching the police, in and near Calcutta taxi-cabs were used. One typical dacoity of this kind which occurred in the Dacca district in 1908 may be mentioned. A body of about 50 young men wearing masks and armed with revolvers, rifles and daggers came to a riverside village surrounded the house of a wealthy resident and took away cash to the value of Rs 25 000, besides jewellery. They shot dead a *chaukidar* or village policeman who attempted to stop them and made off in their boat pursued through the breadth of the district by villagers and police who feared to make a direct attack on so well armed a body of desperadoes. During the pursuit the latter killed three and wounded several others and succeeded in escaping unscathed.

**Government measures**—In order to cope with the situation Government armed itself with special powers. In 1907 the Seditious Meetings Act was passed which enabled District Magistrates to prohibit any meeting likely to promote sedition or disturb public

tranquillity. Further, in any area specially proclaimed by Government no meeting might be held, except with previous permission or after due notice to the police, for the discussion of any subject of a political character or likely to cause disturbance or create public excitement. The duration of this measure was limited to three years, but it was extended to 1911, when a permanent Act of a similar nature but milder in its provisions was placed on the statute book. As the activities of the revolutionaries developed and became more dangerous, further measures were necessary, and in 1908 the Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act and the Explosive Substances Act were passed. The former, as already stated, gave Government authority to suppress newspapers which advocated murder or violence, the latter, which followed the lines of an English Act of the same name passed in 1883, was directed against anarchical crime, penalizing those who manufactured or kept or used explosives for criminal purposes.

These Acts were followed in December 1908 by the Criminal Law Amendment Act, which prescribed a special procedure and a

special court for the trial of anarchical outrages. It provided that in the case of specified offences such as criminal conspiracies against the State and other heinous crimes, there might be a preliminary *ex parte* enquiry held *in camera*, and that the actual trial might be held by a special tribunal consisting of three High Court Judges. The Act also gave Government power to suppress the dangerous revolutionary societies called *samitis*. A month earlier Government had exercised its extraordinary powers under Regulation III of 1818 by placing under detention without trial the head of the most dangerous *samiti* with eight others. Their deportation was a striking manifestation of the powers of Government. It produced a deep impression as showing both the public and the revolutionary party that Government had resources in reserve and would not hesitate to use them. Two months later i.e. in January 1909 the measures known as

## CHAPTER XIX.

### Unrest and Reforms 1909-21.

**The Morley-Minto Reforms, 1909.**—The constitutional changes known as the Morley-Minto Reforms were intended, in the words of their authors, to recognise the natural aspirations of educated men to share in the government of their country. The steps taken with this object consisted of a greater association of Indians with both the executive government and the legislatures, imperial and provincial, combined with the enlargement of the latter and an extension of their functions.

Two Indians were appointed members of the India Council in England, in order that the Secretary of State might have first-hand knowledge of the views of Indians, one of those first appointed was a Bengali gentleman, who had been a member of the Indian Civil Service, Mr (afterwards Sir) K G Gupta. An Indian was also for the first time made a member of the Governor-General's Executive Council, the first to be appointed was a Bengali barrister, Mr S P

Sinha (now Lord Sinha of Raipur), who was succeeded by a Muhammadan barrister from Bihar Mr (afterwards Sir) Ali Imam. An Executive Council was associated with the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal consisting of three members of whom one was an Indian the first Indian member was Raja Kishori Lal Goswami. At the same time a seat was reserved for an Indian on each of the Executive Councils existing in Bombay and Madras.

The changes made in the Legislative Councils were an extension of the existing system following the lines laid down in 1892. They were enlarged the elected element was increased and members were given the right to move resolutions on matters of public interest. These if carried were not binding on the executive government they were merely recommendations which the latter could accept or not at its discretion. Finance committees were also set up which could frame a limited portion of the annual budget as they could deal only with the surplus left over after the Government had allocated money for the schemes approved by it. In Bengal the maximum number of members of the Legislative Council was raised from 20 to 50 and

there was an elected majority. Direct election with territorial constituencies was not introduced. The Muhammadans were allowed separate representatives and a communal electorate. Other members were elected by municipalities and District Boards voting in groups or by special constituencies, such as the Calcutta Corporation, the Calcutta University, the great land owners, and commercial interests.

**Statements of policy.**—In promulgating these reforms Lord Morley insisted that the Government of India, in its legislative as well as its executive character, must remain subordinate to the British Government and the Imperial Parliament, he would have no part or lot in establishing any form of parliamentary government in India. This policy was reaffirmed by Lord Crewe, his successor as Secretary of State for India, who in 1912 announced in Parliament that self-government on colonial lines was neither the hope nor the goal of the policy of the British Government. "There is," he said, "a certain section in India which looks forward to a measure of self-government approaching that which has been granted in the



**Dominions** I see no future for India on these lines. The experiment of extending a measure of self government practically free from Parliamentary control to a race which is not our own even though that race enjoys the services of the best men belonging to our race is one which cannot be tried."

In the same year the Government of India announced that the only possible solution would appear to be gradually to give the provinces a larger measure of self government until at last India would consist of a number of administrations autonomous in all provincial affairs with the Government of India above them all and possessing power to interfere in cases of misgovernment but ordinarily restricting their functions to matters of imperial concern. This statement was endorsed by Mr. Montagu then Under Secretary of State for India as showing the trend of British policy and the lines on which it was proposed to advance. It indicated he said the goal which was to be gradually reached. Nothing however was done to give effect to this policy.

**Events from 1909 to 1914** —The Morley-McDonnell reforms though welcomed at first

failed to satisfy the desire of the politically-minded for fuller power. It was found that the sphere within which the Legislative Councils could affect the action of the Government was closely circumscribed. As stated by Mr Montagu and Lord Chelmsford in their joint report on Indian Constitutional Reforms (1918), the national consciousness and the desire for political power were growing rapidly in the minds of educated Indians, the Councils with their limited opportunities proved to be an insufficient safety valve, popular conventions, such as the National Congress, where speakers were free to attack the Government and give vent to their own aspirations, untrammelled by rules of business or the prospect of a reply, regained their ascendancy.

Still less did the Morley-Minto reforms succeed in reconciling the revolutionary party. The basic principle of those reforms was the co-operation of Indians with the Government, and co-operation was the antithesis of the revolutionaries' policy. They were not diverted from efforts to attain their aim, *viz* , ultimately to subvert British rule, to employ assassination and terrorism as a means to that end, to obtain help, if possible,

from sepoy of the Indian army and to raise funds by plunder for the furtherance of their schemes. A significant proof of their unchanged attitude was soon seen. In February 1909 a Bengali pleader who had acted as Public Prosecutor in cases against members of the party during the previous year, was shot dead while leaving the police court at Alipore. Outrages of the kind with which the public had already become unpleasantly familiar followed one after another with little intermission as the result of what Lord Minto described as a system of seditious writing and seditious speaking of unparalleled violence vociferating to beguiled youth that outrage is the evidence of patriotism and its reward a martyr's crown. Moreover even the more moderate Bengali newspapers viewed with a strange callousness crimes for the justification of which a political motive was put forward.

Similar crimes were committed outside Bengal. The revolutionary party had not been confined to that province the same pernicious doctrines and murderous methods were advocated elsewhere. In 1909 for instance Sir William Curzon Wallie Political A P C a the Irish O<sup>r</sup> and a Parsee gentleman

named Dr Lalcaca were murdered in London; two bombs were thrown at the Viceroy, Lord Minto, at Ahmedabad in Gujarat, but failed to explode owing to faulty construction. an attempt was made, also with a bomb, on the life of the Deputy Commissioner of Umballa; in the Bombay presidency Mr Jackson, Collector of Nasik, was shot dead while attending a farewell entertainment given in his honour. Again, at the end of 1912, when Lord Hardinge, who had succeeded Lord Minto as Viceroy in 1910, was riding on an elephant in a State procession through Delhi, a bomb was thrown at him, which wounded him and killed an attendant who was just behind him.

Without going into the question of how far the Bengal party inspired or participated in these and other outrages, it is beyond doubt that the inflammatory literature produced by it was disseminated, and that members of its societies were active, in other parts of India. The Samiti at Dacca, which had been proscribed at the end of 1908, established its headquarters in Calcutta and not only spread over Bengal but extended its operations to Assam, the Punjab, the United Provinces and the Central Provinces.

The province of Bihar and Orissa was however but slightly affected Bengali agitators being able to make little impression on its educated classes much less on its sturdy agriculturists

The efforts of Government to put down the movement during these years were largely frustrated by its unwillingness to resort after 1900 to extra judicial measures such as deportation without trial under Regulation III of 1818 and by the difficulty of obtaining evidence sufficient for conviction in judicial trials—a difficulty enhanced by the underground working of secret societies and the terrorism which they established So much was this the case that early in 1914 it was recognised that the forces of law and order working through the ordinary channels were beaten On the other hand the murderous activities of the revolutionaries were restricted by the difficulty of obtaining stolen arms and ammunition until August 1914 when a theft from a firm of gunmakers in Calcutta gave them a supply of Mauser pistols and 40,000 rounds of ammunition

Three repressive Acts were passed by the Legislative Council of India during these five years viz the Press Act of 1910 the

Seditious Meetings Act of 1911, which has been mentioned in the preceding chapter, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1913. The Press Act gave Government a much-needed power of control over printing presses and newspapers. Those who became keepers of presses after its enactment were required to give security, and if they printed or published prohibited matter, *e g*, incitements to murder or acts of violence, seditious matter or matter tending to intimidate public servants or private individuals, the security might be forfeited with the offending publication, while a second offence rendered the printing press liable to confiscation. Similar provisions applied to those who became publishers of newspapers after the passing of the Act. This Act had a salutary effect. The Criminal Amendment Act of 1913 amended the law relating to conspiracy by making it penal to conspire to commit an offence even though no overt act was committed in pursuance of the object of the conspiracy.

**The War, 1914-18.**—The outbreak of war with Germany showed how little the general population had been infected with the poison

of disaffection. There was an outburst of  
 loyalty which was sustained till its close.  
 Not to mention other manifestations, the  
 Bengalis anxious to disprove the aspersions  
 of Macaulay on their race, raised an  
 active service battalion the 49th Bengalis  
 which served overseas in Mesopotamia.  
 Readiness to serve in the army was a new  
 development in Bengal. The battalion was  
 disbanded after the war but in 1922  
 two battalions of Bengalis were formed  
 as part of the Indian Territorial Force  
 one a battalion of 94th Russell  
 Infantry and the other a battalion  
 of the University Training Corps. Much  
 was also done to supply lascars and labourers  
 for work overseas. In 1918 over 13 000  
 lascars were sent out who did excellent work  
 in the merchant service. 20 000 non-com-  
 batants were enrolled in Calcutta and nearly  
 16 000 in other parts of the province. Cachar  
 and Sylhet some prisoners in jails even  
 volunteered for non-combatant service in  
 Mesopotamia. In Bihar and Orissa as soon  
 as recruiting was organized 300 to 400 com-  
 batants were enlisted monthly for the  
 force while 13 000 men were enrolled for  
 labour corps altogether 7 000 men from the

Santal Parganas and Chota Nagpur served in labour corps in France

At the same time, the manufacture of munitions and supplies for the armies in Mesopotamia and East Africa gave an immense stimulus to industry and called into being new and important enterprises. The natural resources of both provinces in coal, iron, mica and timber were exploited for the cause of the allies. The rails manufactured by the Tata Iron and Steel Works at Jamshedpur provided not only for Mesopotamia, but also for Egypt, Palestine and East Africa. The jute mills worked to their utmost capacity, and the millions of sand-bags which they produced for the trenches took the place of the sacks of commerce.

As the war went on, the feeling that Indians should have a larger share in the government of their country, the doctrine of India for the Indians, gained new strength, especially after 1915. The claim that the allies were champions of nationalism against autocratic despotism was eagerly taken up. The principle of "self-determination" was acclaimed. The columns of the Bengali newspapers were more and more filled with demands that this principle should be speedily



applied to India. The trend of political thought at this time is well described by Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford in their *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms* (1918). The war has come to be regarded more and more clearly as a struggle between liberty and despotism, a struggle for the right of all people to rule their own destinies.

Attention is repeatedly called to the fact that in Europe Britain is fighting on the side of liberty, and it is urged that Britain cannot deny to the people of India that for which she is herself fighting in Europe and in the fight for which she has been helped by India's blood and treasure.

The speeches of English and American statesmen <sup>pro</sup>claiming the necessity for destroying German militarism and for conceding the right of self-determination to the nations have had much effect upon political opinion in India and have contributed to give new force and vitality to the demand for self-government which was making itself more widely felt among the progressive section of the people.

Practical expression was given to this feeling by the establishment in September 1916 of a Home Rule League on the initiative of

Mrs Annie Besant, who was an ardent champion of the cause of India for the Indians. This body was especially active in Madras, where it was founded, but its propaganda extended to Bengal and Bihar. Its programme was accepted by both the Indian National Congress and the Moslem League, which towards the end of the same year found common ground in a definite scheme of self-government. The formulation of such a scheme and its adoption by the chief political organisation of the Muhammadans, as well as by the Congress party, marked a new consolidation of political thought and endeavour. Self-government could no longer be regarded as a vague aspiration now that its meaning was expressed in concrete proposals and a programme of constitutional reform was drawn up.

**The attitude of Muhammadans.**—During the first half of the nineteenth century the Muhammadans of Bengal and Bihar were stirred by the Wahabi movement described in Chapter XXI. That movement had a political as well as spiritual side. It aimed not only at spiritual regeneration, *i e*, the purging of Islam and the restoration of a purer

form of faith but also at the establishment of Islam as a political power. The stimulus of the movement died away in the second half of the nineteenth century, but it had succeeded in kindling an increased religious fervour, especially among the Muhammadans of Eastern Bengal. The Muhammadans generally were contented and loyal, holding aloof from political agitation and refusing to have any alliance with the Congress party. Their leaders were impressed with the necessity for educational advance so that they might be able to hold their own against Hindu competition; they looked to education rather than to agitation for the protection of their interests. They were moved out of this attitude of political quiescence by the Morley-Minto reforms, and in 1906 obtained from the Viceroy, Lord Minto, recognition of their claim that special provision should be made for them based not merely on their numerical strength but also on their political importance. They were accordingly given special representation by a communal electorate.

At the same time they began to realize the need of organization. The outcome was the establishment of the All India Muslim League for the protection of their interests against

and economic as well as political. Its political programme was "the orderly development of the country under the Imperial Crown." The idea of self-government advocated by the Congress party was scouted as impracticable. In 1908 its president, Sir Ali Imam, declared that it was the sacred duty of the League to save the Muhammadan community from the political error of joining in an organization like the Congress, which in the main cried for the moon, while in 1910 Sir Valentine Chirol wrote in *Indian Unrest* "It may be confidently asserted that never before have the Muhammadans of India as a whole identified their interests and their aspirations so closely as at the present day with the consolidation and permanence of British rule."

In 1916 the Moslem League, as already stated, joined with the Congress in putting forward a scheme of self-government of the colonial type as the goal of political endeavour. The *rapprochement* between the two bodies was due to the control of the League passing into the hands of an advanced section of Muhammadans, which repudiated its former policy. This policy had been based on the belief that Muhammadan interests

would be protected by the Government and would be sacrificed by the Congress party the success of which it was thought would produce Hindu ascendancy. It was abandoned partly in consequence of the attraction of the idea of self government for India which grew in popularity as the sense of Indian nationality grew and partly to a gradual loss of faith and confidence in the Government as the guardian of Muhammadan interests.

The latter feeling was connected with international politics for it was thought that England had failed to support Turkey still the greatest Muhammadan power against aggression. It was strengthened by the annulment of the Partition of Bengal in 1912. Eastern Bengal and Assam had been regarded as a Moslem province in the sense that it was expected that Muhammadans being numerically preponderant their interests educational and other would be specially cherished. The Muhammadans of that province had suffered from and resisted the lawlessness which attended the agitation against the Partition. Lord Morley's announcement that the Partition was a settled fact was regarded as a broken pledge and the action of Government in annulling it was looked on as

a breach of faith and as a triumph for hostile agitation. It seemed that the Muhammadan support of Government throughout that agitation had gone for nothing, and the conservative section found it difficult to meet the argument that more was to be got from active agitation than from passive acquiescence.

### **Continued revolutionary outrages.—**

During the war the revolutionaries' tactics remained the same, except that, as shown later, they designed to produce a rising with the help of Germany. The melancholy list of ruthless murders and dacoities planned and executed by these implacable enemies of British rule grew longer. By April 1918 the number of outrages committed by them in Bengal since 1906 totalled 210 and of attempted outrages 101, altogether 82 persons had been killed and 121 wounded, while the number of persons whose complicity was known to the police was over 1,000. The province of Bihar and Orissa, however, remained almost immune from infection, though it was used as a seedbed for propaganda, it took no real root.

The outrages reached a climax in 1915 and 1916, after which the movement was held in

check by the firm and capable administration of Lord Ronaldshay's Government, by the use of the powers given by Regulation III of 1818 and by a new weapon which Government possessed in the shape of the Defence of India Act. Before this Act was brought into force the fair trial of persons accused of revolutionary crime had been rendered practically impossible by the murders of police officers, approvers, witnesses and any one suspected of having given information or help to the police. Terrorism prevented an open and impartial trial in the ordinary Courts for witnesses were afraid to give evidence openly lest they should be assassinated.

The ordinary laws being appropriate only to normal conditions of crime and not to wide spread conspiracies working by means of mere murder and terrorism a special procedure was prescribed by the Defence of India Act. This measure which was passed in order to provide for the safety and defence of India during the war came into effect in 1915. It provided for the appointment of special tribunals for the prompt trial of revolutionary crimes without either committing to procedure or subsequent judicial appeal. Rules which had a most salutary

effect, were also made under the Act, authorizing the arrest and internment of persons dangerous to the peace. By the end of 1918 there were 100 State prisoners in confinement under Regulation III of 1818, while 700 were interned, *i e*, living under supervision with their freedom of movement restrained, under the Defence of India Act. The result was that for the first year since 1907 no member of the public was murdered and only three police officers were killed by the revolutionary party.

**Intrigues with Germany, 1915.**—Further proof of the lengths to which the Bengal revolutionary party was prepared to go was afforded by a plot, which they made in 1915, to import arms and start a rising with German help. They were in touch with a body known as the *Ghadr* or mutiny party, which had been established at San Francisco with the object of starting a revolution in India, and the whole scheme was under the direction of the German Consul-General at Shanghai, who again acted under orders from the German Embassy at Washington. Funds, supplemented by local dacoities, were obtained from the Germans and



from conspirators in America and Bengali emissaries went to Batavia in Java to arrange details with German agents there

A steamer owned by a German firm left California for Batavia from which it was intended to make for a place named Rai Mangal in the Sundarbans. Arms were to be landed there and then sent to Calcutta, Balasore and Hatia, an island off the coast of Noakhali. German officers who were expected by the steamer were to go to Eastern Bengal and there raise and train armies. Calcutta was to be isolated by blowing up bridges on the Madras, Bengal, Nagpur and East Indian Railways. One body was to concentrate on Hatia and after securing Eastern Bengal to march on Calcutta. The Calcutta party was to seize all arms and munitions round it to take Fort

conspiracy was disclosed and arrests took place in such distant places as Shanghai, Singapore and America, which were followed by trials in San Francisco and Chicago. Two of the Bengali leaders, who were discovered with a small gang in Balasore, were shot dead in a fight with a small body led by the Magistrate of the district, and the Calcutta section after this fled for refuge to French territory at Chandernagore.

**The Komagata Maru incident, 1914.**—The year before this what is known as the *Komagata Maru* incident had occurred. A certain Sikh chartered a Japanese steamer, the *Komagata Maru*, through a German agent at Hongkong with the idea of landing emigrants in Canada in defiance of the immigration rules. Nearly 400 passengers, mostly Sikhs, were taken on board at Hongkong, Shanghai and Japanese ports, but were not allowed to land at Vancouver or on the return journey at Hongkong. The steamer then left for Calcutta, filled with angry and disappointed men, among whom members of the *Ghadr* party had been busy preaching revolt. They landed at Budge-Budge, where the Government of India provided a special train to take

Turbulence subsided after troops, infantry and cavalry had been drafted in and military posts connected by cavalry and motor car patrols had been established. The mobs avoided direct conflict with the troops and pursuit was impeded by the flooded state of the country. The different bands of pillagers melted away when troop appeared and re-assembled to commit fresh outrages out of their reach. The rising had scarcely been quelled in Shahabad when it broke out across the river Son in an area of 500 square miles in the district of Gaya. There too it was quickly put down by moving troops into the disturbed area but not till over 30 villages had been attacked or plundered.

The outbreak lasted altogether little over a fortnight. Its further continuance would it is believed have set the whole of Bihar alfire and seriously affected the eastern districts of the United Provinces.\* This danger was happily averted and the disturbance confined within local limits by the prompt and effective use of military force. In reviewing the outbreak the Government of Bihar and Orissa declared that 'to find

any parallel to the state of turmoil and disorder, it is necessary to go back over a period of sixty years to the days of the great Mutiny." The disturbed area coincided with that affected by the Mutiny of 1857, and the outrages committed were of the same character in both years—murders, robberies, arson, sacrilege and rape

There is much that is mysterious about the causes of the outbreak. It was represented at the time that it was due to the intense feeling of Hindus about the sacrifice of cows by Muhammadans, and some colour was lent to this idea by the fact that the outbreak began during the Bakr-Id festival (when cows are commonly sacrificed by Muhammadans) and that there had been a dispute on the subject in one of the first villages attacked. That dispute, however, had been amicably settled, and the Hindus of the village not only took no part in the attack but actually sheltered and protected their Muhammadan fellow-villagers. The attacks on the Muhammadans moreover took place after the day of sacrifice there had been no provocation from the Muhammadans, and there are other factors which preclude the explanation that

it was merely the outcome of spontaneous local fanaticism

It is at least certain that the rising was the result of a plot secretly made suddenly executed and carefully organized. Snowball letters called *patias* inciting the Hindus against the Muhammadans and promising help from the Germans and Bengalis had been sent out broadcast over an area extending far beyond the actual circle of disturbance. The large bodies of Hindu which gathered together were led by Hindu zamindars who directed operations on horse back or from elephants. One zamindar at least was persuaded that he would reign a Raja over Bihar. The mobs went about calling on the name of a descendant of King Singh who had headed the rebellion in 1857. Other cries were Victory to the Germans and The rule of the English is over.

have been entertained was due partly to a credulity which was easily exploited and partly to the fact that recruiting for the army had been started in Shahabad and was construed as a proof that British troops had been used up in the war. The issue of currency notes for one rupee was similarly believed to be due to the exhaustion of the monetary resources of Government, while the minds of the people were unsettled by the long continuance of the war and by the appearance of agitators preaching the doctrine of Home Rule for India. The existence of such subversive propaganda was taken as evidence of the loss of power and authority by Government. At the same time it is noticeable that except for cutting telegraph wires, damage was not done to Government property and that the use of firearms was eschewed. The whole outbreak was directed against Muham-madans and undoubtedly gave vent to the inveterate animosity of Hindus against them. It is equally certain that it would never have occurred had it not been believed that British rule was coming to an end and that the forces of disorder could be let loose with impunity. Even so, the authors of the plot and their precise motives remain obscure.

The outbreak was all the more remarkable because the Moslem League and the Congress party mainly Hindu in character had recently entered into an *entente* for political purposes. It serves at least to show how little control the political leaders had at this time over the peasantry in this part of the country the outbreaks being an inopportune disproof of the idea of unity among Hindus and Muhammadans which they were seeking to promote. It also shows the latent animosity between the two communities which still exists in some parts of the country and the ease with which it can be fanned into a dangerous flame as well as the secrecy with which a popular movement can be organized and the rapidity with which it can spread.

**Mr Montagu's announcement, 1917**—In August 1917 less than six weeks before these disturbances began Mr Montagu Secretary of State for India made a momentous announcement of a new and more liberal policy in reply to a question asked in the House of Commons. It stated:—  
 The policy of His Majesty's Government and that of the Government of India are in

complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. They have decided that substantial steps in this direction should be taken as soon as possible . . .

Progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages. The British Government and the Government of India, on whom the responsibility lies for the welfare and advancement of the Indian peoples, must be judges of the time and measure of each advance, and they must be guided by the co-operation received by those upon whom new opportunities of service will thus be conferred and by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed in their sense of responsibility."

### **Opposition to the Reforms Scheme.—**

Mr Montagu himself visited India and with the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, drew up a scheme of constitutional reform. When, in 1918 their proposals were published, murmurs of disappointment and the clamour of opposition were heard. Mrs Besant, for instance,



characterized the scheme as leading to a line beyond which its authors cannot go—a perpetual slavery which can only be broken by a revolution. The reforms were scouted by many as inadequate; they were opposed by others from more sinister motives, i. e. because they were likely to contribute to peace and put the people out of sympathy with the spirit of revolt. Whereas in 1917 the Congress passed a resolution asking for full responsible government within 15 years, it now pressed for its accomplishment without delay.

and generally known as the Rowlatt Act, was passed in accordance with its recommendations. This measure, which conferred on Government the power to restrain personal liberty without trial, aroused keen resentment. It was represented to be an insult to Indians and a potential engine of oppression, though it was directed solely against anarchical crime which the ordinary law had failed to suppress. It was also of temporary duration, for it was to continue in operation for only three years after the end of the war, and it was, in fact, never put into force. It has been said, before now, that it is a weakness of the Government of India to arm itself with powers which it is reluctant to use.

A furious agitation against the Act was started in 1919. Grave disturbances took place in the Punjab, which were described by a special commission of inquiry (the Hunter Committee) as open rebellion. The stern measures of repression adopted there exacerabated public feeling. The susceptibilities of the Muhammadans were excited by the agitation over the Khilafat question mentioned below. All classes moreover were affected by the rise of prices, depreciation of the

value of money and economic stress, which were an aftermath of the war and added to the post war restlessness. They were connected partly with a failure of the monsoon but mainly with the enhancement of prices in Europe as a result of a reduced production of the necessities of life and an inflation of paper currency but the Indian press seized the opportunity to make out that Government was responsible

ment of Bihar and Orissa as a member of a commission which investigated the charges which he made

He now seized the opportunity to head the agitation against the Rowlatt Act and organize opposition to Government. His political teaching had a spiritual under-current. Material might was to be overcome by spiritual force—soul force as it was commonly called. The movement which he started in order to force Government to withdraw the obnoxious Act was described by him as *Satyagraha* or the pursuit of truth, and was the precursor of the non-co-operation movement described later. It was, in fact, a movement of passive resistance, which was to be employed as a lever for the redress of grievances. It was announced that every one should refuse to obey the Rowlatt Act and also such other laws as a committee to be appointed later might think fit. Extraordinary misrepresentations of the intention and scope of the Rowlatt Act were in circulation, *e g*, that it involved taxation of incomes up to 50 per cent. Local committees were set up to educate

the masses in the doctrine of passive resistance. A favourite weapon of the movement was the proclamation of *hartals* (literally the shutting of locks) i.e. the closing of shops and stoppage of business. The efforts of the agitators to enforce *hartals* were provocative of violence, and in April 1919 serious rioting broke out in Calcutta which had to be put down by armed force. What however gave a special stimulus and driving force to the movement was the appeal which Mr Gandhi made to the Muhammadan sentiment in 1919 by taking up and leading the Khilafat agitation.

**The Khilafat agitation**—This agitation was connected with an international question, viz. the position of Turkey and of its Sultan as Khalif (Caliph). For some years past there had been a growing sense of solidarity among the Muhammadans which found expression in the idea of pan-Islamism. Sympathy for their co-religionists elsewhere had always been among the Muhammadans in India in general and Bengal in particular. Islam is a great religious brotherhood—this feeling had had little political effect. When for instance the Russo-Turkish

broke out in 1877, religious services were held in some of the mosques in Calcutta and subscriptions were raised for the relief of the Turkish sick and wounded and of the families of those who were killed, but it is on record that the movement hardly extended outside Calcutta and excited little interest among the bulk of the Muhammadan population in Eastern Bengal

This attitude of apathy or indifferentism disappeared with the growing weakness of the Muhammadan powers. The defeats of Turkey, still the greatest Muhammadan power, by other European nations, and her loss of territory, aroused fears of a decline of Islam. Resentment was aroused in 1912, when Italy took Tripoli, the last of her dominions in Africa. The Balkan war of 1912, in which the Turks were driven back almost to the walls of Constantinople, still further heightened the feeling of alarm at the aggression of Christian powers. A section of those who had imbibed the doctrines of pan-Islamism now began to proclaim in India that the first duty of Muhammadans was allegiance to the Khalif,

re to the Sultan of Turkey. These doctrines at the time met with little response. When Turkey joined in the great war against England and her allies, her action was deplored and condemned. The idea which the Germans endeavoured to implant that the Turkey were engaged in a *jihad* or holy war in which other Muhammadans should make common cause with them was rejected as fantastic.

After the war however the susceptibilities of the Muhammadans were strung to a high pitch by anxiety as to the fate of Turkey. It is a tenet with them that spiritual and temporal power should be united in the Khalif or commander of the faithful. The Sultan of Turkey was recognised as the Khalif and it was feared that the terms of peace with Turkey would deprive him of the political power necessary for him to uphold his position as defender of the faith. The Muhammadans became restive during the long negotiations precedent to settling terms of peace and the Treaty of Versailles and Sevres gave an opportunity to those who represented that Islam was in danger and that Great Britain was

indifferent to its interests. A vigorous agitation was started insisting that Turkey should suffer no diminution of territory and that her integrity should be maintained. Some even gave out that Muhammadans would find it impossible to keep their secular loyalty if their demands were not satisfied.

Their demands were taken up by Mr. Gandhi, who declared that the situation which had arisen gave "such an opportunity of uniting Hindus and Muhammadans as would not arise in a hundred years." Early in 1920 he issued a manifesto announcing that the claims of the Muhammadans were irresistible and that the Hindus should realize that the Khilafat question overshadowed the reforms and everything also.

### **The non-co-operation movement, 1920.—**

The passing by Parliament in 1919 of the Government of India Act embodying the reforms scheme failed to stem the wave of unrest. Mr. Gandhi developed his campaign by promulgating the necessity of what he called "non-violent non-co-operation" in order to force Government to comply with the demands of Muhammadans regarding the Khilafat.



and to make its position impossible in of refusal. This meant that the people to dissociate themselves from or act boycott Government and its institutions. Lawyers and litigants were not to resort to the Courts, students were to withdraw from Government schools for which 'national schools' were to be substituted, titles were to be resigned, his followers were neither to stand as candidates themselves nor to support candidates at the elections for reformed legislatures which were held at the end of 1920. *Swaraj* he declared in September 1920 would be attained within a year. *Swaraj* he did not define but it connoted self-conquest as well as political government. The people were to be made fit for power by a spiritual uplift and self-conquest.

Not only did the Khilafat Committee accept the main tenets of non-co-operation but the National Congress followed suit.

Mr. Gandhi became its undisputed leader. One significant outcome of the antagonistic spirit now displayed was that the Congress altered its creed. Hitherto it had been declared its object to obtain self-government within the British Empire. It was now changed to the attainment of *Swaraj*.

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 efal means without any reference to  
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n the whole the non-co-operation move-  
 t failed to get a hold over Bengal in 1920  
 Gandhi's followers abstained from taking  
 in the elections to the legislature, but  
 pleaders were altruistic enough to give  
 heir practice One man gave up his title,  
 w honorary magistrates and subordinate  
 ce officers resigned but the people gener-  
 were indifferent to the movement

**Industrial unrest.**—To add to the unrest,  
 e was economic pressure, due to the high  
 of living, and industrial discontent  
 Bengal alone there were 106 strikes  
 eting 170,000 employees in the last six  
 mths of 1920 Almost all were due to  
 ands for higher wages, and were short-  
 d, for the employers recognized the justice  
 he men's claims and adjusted wages to  
 es, *e g* , by increases of as much as 50 per  
 : above the pre-war level

## CHAPTER XX

### The Reforms of 1921

**The problems of Government** —The question of revising the constitution so as to carry out the policy sketched in Mr Montagu's announcement of August 1917 was one of especial difficulty owing to the peculiar conditions of India. Some held that the people as a whole were too backward to be trusted with the powers of self government and that British tutelage was necessary for the peaceful and orderly development of the country. Others while admitting their backwardness held that they could only realize responsibility by having the opportunity to exercise it and that they must learn by experience even at the risk of mistakes. The problem was complicated not only by the deep lines of social and religious cleavage among the people but also by the co-existence of three distinct classes viz, the educated classes forming a minority but of steadily growing importance a revolutionary party representing a small fraction of the population but of dangerous potentialities

and the masses without political experience or even political aspirations. The influence of what may be called the politically minded class was increasing. It either clamorously demanded or quietly pressed for greater political power. Its attitude, generally critical and sometimes obstructive, was rendering the task of government increasingly difficult. When concrete measures were taken by the Government, they were apt to be suspected or opposed simply because they were Government measures.

On the other hand, there were the illiterate masses to be considered, and these formed the bulk of the population. They were described by Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford as "an enormous country population, for the most part poor, ignorant, non-politically minded and unused to any system of elections—immersed indeed in the struggle for existence." So far from desiring political changes, they were in a state of "peaceful conservatism" and enjoyed a "placid, pathetic contentment." But this, it was thought, should be "disturbed" in the hope that they might gather, in the course of time, the refreshing fruit of democracy and develop into nationhood within the British Empire.

In the meantime, said the authors of the report while we do everything that we can to encourage Indians to settle their own problems for themselves we must retain power to restrain them from seeking to do so in a manner that would threaten the stability of the country The political education of the ryot cannot be a rapid and may be a very difficult process Till it is complete he must be exposed to the risk of oppression by people who are stronger and cleverer than he is and until it is clear that his interests can safely be left in his own hands or that the legislative councils represent and consider his interests we must retain power to protect him Similarly power had to be retained for the maintenance of law and order against the attempts of revolutionaries to undermine and overthrow Government by means of anarchical crime *Salus populi suprema lex*

Lastly it has to be remembered that the old principle of government was itself in process of transformation The idea of a beneficent autocracy was being abandoned as explained in a passage quoted with approval by Mr Montagu and Lord Chelmsford "Up to Lord

Curzon's viceroyalty there was a sturdy determination to do what was right for India whether India altogether liked it or not. The reforms which followed his regime brought in a power of challenge and obstruction—influence without responsibility, and rather than fight, we have often to give way. We are shedding the role of benevolent despotism, and the people—especially those who are most friendly to us—cannot understand what role we mean to assume in its place. We are accordingly losing their confidence and with it some of our power for good.” Good administration and light taxation had hitherto been regarded as the panacea for British, and therefore alien, rule. The scheme of reforms which was now introduced was based on the idea that sound national development must proceed on the lines of English constitutional progress and no other. It was inspired by a belief in the efficacy of the ballot to provide a panacea for discontent and to work out the political salvation of India.

**The Government of India Act, 1919.**—It was decided that the provinces were the domain in which the earlier steps towards the progressive realization of responsible govern-

ment should be taken, and that consequently the provinces should be given the largest measure of independence legislative administrative and financial of the Government of India which was compatible with the due discharge by the latter of its own responsibilities. The new system of provincial government devised in consequence which came into effect in 1921 is described below the changes in the constitution of the central government of India lie outside the limits of this work.

The Government of India Act (1919) was designed to introduce the first stage in a measured advance to responsible government. This involved the creation of an electorate and the bestowal on its representatives of a share in the work and responsibilities of government. The domain of provincial government was divided into two fields, one made over to Ministers chosen from elected members of the provincial legislature while the other remained under the administration of the Governor in Council. It was felt to be impossible to withdraw the guardianship of the peace of India from the official agency which Parliament charged with the duties of administration. At the same time the ministers were made responsible to the Legislative

Councils, and the members of those Councils to their constituents, for the conduct of the branches of administration transferred to their charge

**The dyarchic system.**—The Government as reconstituted is thus a form of dyarchy or dual government. On the one hand the Governor acts in conjunction with the Executive Council, composed partly of British officials and partly of Indian non-officials, and is responsible to the Government of India, the Secretary of State and, ultimately, the British Parliament. The functions of this branch of the Government are confined to what are called reserved subjects. These include matters which are connected with the maintenance of law and order or which require expert administrative training, such as the administration of justice, police and jails, and the sources of imperial revenue, *e g*, land revenue, irrigation and forests.

On the other hand, the Governor acts with Ministers, whom he appoints from among the elected members of the Legislative Council and who are responsible to that body. This branch of Government deals with what are known as



transferred subjects which comprise certain functions of Government in which there is a prospect of social progress. The principal are education local self government, medical relief, public health agriculture industrial development and excise. The transfer of such important functions to Ministers responsible to a legislature with an elected majority, and through it to the electorate is an innovation of the highest importance. The Ministers are in fact the embodiment of the representative system in the Government. Their term of office is synchronous with the lifetime of the Council *i.e.* the maximum period is three years and their continuance in office is supposed to depend on their having its confidence and support.

It rests with the Governor to establish co-ordination between the two branches of Government to ensure so to speak unity in diarchy. His position in this respect has been compared with that of a driver directing the movements of two teams harnessed to the car of State but prone to run in opposite ways but according to another view the executive body has two arms which while each can and does perform separate functions are yet

members of one body controlled by a common head

In Bengal the new Government started with four members of Council (two British officers of the Indian Civil Service and two Indian non-officials) and three Ministers. One of the Ministers was Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea, who had long been prominent in public life, having been a leader of the Indian National Congress and a protagonist in the opposition to the Partition of Bengal.

In Bihar and Orissa there were three Members of Council (two British officers of the Indian Civil Service and one Indian non-official) and two Ministers, but the number of Members of Council has since been reduced, one of the officials being eliminated. The first Governor of the province was Lord Sinha of Raipur, who established a double record, being the first Indian to be raised to the peerage and the first Indian to be appointed a Governor in British India. He had already had a brilliant career. A Bengali by birth and a barrister by profession, he was appointed successively Advocate-General, Legal Member in the Governor-General's Executive Council and, after his resignation of that high office,

Member of the Executive Council of the Governor of Bengal. In 1915, in the interval between the two appointments last mentioned, he was President of the Indian National Congress. Subsequently he represented India at the first Imperial War Conference in London and also at the Versailles Peace Conference and in 1920 was appointed Under Secretary of State for India with a seat in the House of Lords. He resigned his appointment as Governor before the end of 1921 owing to ill health.

**The Legislative Council** — Another pillar in the fabric of reformed government is the Legislative Council which directs legislation imposes taxation within certain limits and controls the public expenditure by its power in regard to the annual budget. This is presented in the form of demands for grants which may be granted refused or reduced. Some items are not votable (*i.e.* the Council is not authorized to deal with them in this way) such as contributions to the central government charges on loans expenditure of which the amount has been prescribed by law the salaries of High Court Judges and of officers appointed by the Crown or by the Secretary of

State and also expenditure in some areas which have been excluded from the scope of the reforms scheme, viz, the districts of Darjeeling and the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bengal and the district of Angul in Bihar and Orissa. In the case moreover of reserved subjects the Governor has authority to sanction amounts refused by the Council if in his opinion they are necessary for the discharge of his responsibility for the subject. The Governor may also sanction, in cases of emergency, such expenditure as is necessary for the safety or tranquillity of the province or for carrying on any department. Otherwise, he has no authority to restore, *i e*, sanction expenditure refused by the Council.

The Council has also power to see that the money voted by it is spent on the objects for which it is intended. The machinery for this purpose consists of a standing committee of public accounts, two-thirds of the members of which are elected by non-official members of the Council. A further link between the legislature and the executive Government is afforded by Standing Committees, consisting of non-official members elected by the Council, they consider important matters connected with both the reserved and transferred

departments and advise the Members and Ministers regarding them

The Legislative Council in Bengal has been enlarged to 130 members of whom 113 are elected four (*viz* the Members of Council) are *ex-officio* members and 22 are nominated. The nominated members include one representative of the Indian Christian Community, one of the depressed classes and two of the labouring classes. There are only 16 officials in addition to the Members of Council. The former Council consisted of only 53 members of whom a bare majority (28) were elected and a little over one third were officials. The elective element has been raised to 81 per cent and the official reduced to 13 per cent.

In Bihar and Orissa the Legislative Council consists of 84 members of whom 58 are elected and 26 are *ex-officio* members or nominated by the Governor. The nominated members include two representatives of the aborigines, two of the depressed classes, one each of the Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians, domiciled Bengalis and labouring classes. There are only 13 officials in addition to the Members of Council.

**The electorate.**—Hitherto the electorates had been limited to members of local bodies, such as District Boards and Municipalities, or of special associations, such as the Chamber of Commerce and the University Senate, or of special communities, such as Muhammadans and great landholders. The total number of electors did not exceed 12,000 in Bengal and was under 2,500 in Bihar and Orissa. A low franchise was now adopted, the minimum qualification of a rural elector being the payment of cess amounting to one rupee and of an urban elector the annual payment of taxes amounting to not less than a rupee and a half. The result was to create for Bengal an electorate of 1,020,000 persons, and for Bihar and Orissa of 325,000 persons, of whom few understood the purpose of elections. At the first election in Bengal 71 out of 94 constituencies were contested, and only 30 per cent of the total number of electors voted. In Bihar and Orissa 46 out of 76 constituencies were contested and, the number of votes recorded was a little over 40 per cent of the total. It should be added that the Muhammadans have been allowed a communal electorate, *i e*, there are special constituencies in which alone Muhammadans may vote, and

that the same privilege has been given to Europeans and Anglo-Indians

**The working of the reforms**—The present constitution is an instalment of self government and further progress is dependent on the results achieved. The Government of India Act of 1919 provides for the appointment after ten years trial of the new constitution of a parliamentary commission to inquire into the working of the system of government and the growth of education and to report as to whether it is desirable to establish the system of responsible government. The present system may therefore be regarded as temporary and transitional. It is too early as yet to gauge its success but it may at least be said that the educated classes have been given an opportunity of securing a training in self government. In both provinces the task of government was complicated at the outset by the non co operation movement described later and also by financial stress which in Bengal was so marked that up to the end of 1923 the budget made no provision for any development allowed for no progress and merely permitted the carrying on of the administration in its minimum essentials.

The first Legislative Councils were characterized by activity in the asking of questions and discussion of resolutions and had also some legislative enactments to their credit. On the other hand, a party system was not evolved. The first elections depended on personal considerations and not on broad political issues, and organized parties with definite programmes did not materialize subsequently. For this the absence of political traditions and of the habit of association for a common political purpose is accountable. There was a tendency to be irresponsible, in the sense that both Government and the Ministers were attacked without reference to the merits of their proposals and without consideration of the fact that members might later be in a position to put into force the policy which they advocated.

Little effort also was made to organize public opinion in the constituencies. The necessity for the political education of the people was admirably set forth in a passage quoted in Mr Montagu and Lord Chelmsford's *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms* (1918) "Hitherto," it was pointed out, "they have regarded the official as



their representative in the councils of government and now we have to tear up that faith by the roots to teach them that in future they must bring their troubles to the notice of an elected representative—further that they must have the power to compel his attention. We have to bring about the most radical revolution in the people's traditional ideas of the relation between ruler and ruled and it will be a difficult and even dangerous business, for it is neither safe nor easy to meddle with traditional ideas in India. Unless the political changes now in contemplation are accompanied by a political campaign directed to awakening in all classes alike but especially in this particular class a sense of citizenship disaster will certainly follow.

In 1921 in opening the Bengal Legislative Council His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught reminded the members that the training and expansion of the electorate would be just as much their duty as the conduct and direction of the administration. In spite of this the political education of the electors was left in the main to the non-cooperation party whose object it was to foster not a sense of citizenship but hostility to authority and the whole system of government. Owing to the activity of this party the

centre of political life lay not inside but outside the Councils. Sedition was widely disseminated from the platform and through the agency of itinerary propagandists. Agitators played on the feelings of the ignorant masses. The Government was denounced as satanic (an epithet first applied to it by Mr Gandhi), a cruel oppressor and a cunning exploiter. It was boldly suggested that Government and all its works could not be mended but must be ended. Appeals were made to racial feeling, intimidation and social boycott were resorted to, economic and agrarian discontent were exploited, to shake respect for law and authority and to arouse a widespread hostility to Government. Nothing perhaps can better illustrate the dangerous situation thus created than the case of a man who was convicted for making a flagrantly seditious speech. He pleaded in defence that his object was non-political, *viz*, to sell a patent medicine, and that the best way to attract an audience was to deliver a seditious speech.

**Mr. Gandhi's prop<sup>a</sup>ganda, 1921-22.**—After the inauguration of the reforms scheme, Mr Gandhi developed his propaganda and

started an intensive campaign for the extension of non-co-operation. In March 1921 he published a programme under which funds were to be collected for the campaign the use of alcohol was interdicted and the virtues of hand spinning and weaving were inculcated as a means of making India independent of foreign cloth and also in a kind of way effecting national regeneration. He had previously been against a boycott of English cloth but now veered round and ordered it to be discarded and destroyed while the weaving of home spun cloth called *khaddar* was commanded.

In October 1921 he and other leaders of the non-co-operation movement issued a manifesto that it was the duty of every Indian soldier and civilian to sever his connection with Government. This was followed by concerted attempts to undermine the loyalty of the police and by a development of the activities of volunteer corps. These were bodies of young men whose name and work recall those of the volunteer corps employed in the agitation against the Partition of Bengal. Occasionally employed in social service they were mainly used for carrying out orders of civil boycott intimidation and picketing.

and generally for interfering with the liberty of law-abiding citizens. There was a rapid increase of open lawlessness and defiance of authority, and towards the end of 1921 Mr Gandhi began to make preparations for a declaration of wholesale civil disobedience, which he defined as a "civil revolution which, wherever practised, would mean the end of Government's authority and open defiance of Government and its law." But this consummation was not reached.

Mr Gandhi had an extraordinary influence owing to his reputation for saintliness, which made a special appeal to Hindus. He was known as Mahatma or the great soul, many regarded him as an incarnation of the deity and credited him with thaumaturgic powers. It was commonly believed that if he was sentenced to imprisonment, he would be miraculously delivered from jail, the walls would fall down or the doors would fly open. Two stories, mentioned in Lord Ronaldshay's *Lands of the Thunderbolt*), which are typical of the current belief, may be quoted. A body of police in the Jalpaiguri district of Bengal, which had made some arrests, was attacked by a mob of villagers wearing a white cap of angular shape, known

as the Gandhi cap as it was commonly worn by his followers. The police had to open fire, and the villagers broke and fled after suffering some casualties. They had been told and believed that all who wore the Gandhi cap were safe from bullet or shot. Another story was that when Mr. Gandhi was addressing a meeting in Bihar one of his hearers ventured to dispute with him and fell down dead. The body was covered over with a basket and when the police came to enquire and the basket was lifted it was found that the corpse had been transformed into the carcase of a pig.

**Non-co-operation in Bengal**—Mr. Gandhi himself ingeminated non violence, but the movement soon degenerated into violence coercion and terrorism. It changed into an avowed attempt to paralyze and destroy the existing Government by means of non-co-operation. It was engineered and fostered by numerous meetings—in Bengal over 4 000 were held in less than six months in 1921—by inflammatory speeches by the activities of agitators sometimes disguised as *fatirs* and *sadhus* who stirred up trouble in the villages and by a campaign of wilful misrepresenta-

tion and intimidation. Professedly non-violent, it was provocative of serious disorder, loss of life and a growth of a dangerous spirit of lawlessness.

Fortunately at this juncture, Bengal had, under Lord Ronaldshay, a resolute and resourceful Government. Attempts were made to check the spread of the movement by the machinery of the ordinary law, by the formation of loyalist leagues and by meetings to expose the fallacies spread by the non-co-operation party. These largely failed, but other measures were more effectual, such as the control of meetings and processions, the proclamation as illegal associations of corps of volunteers which intimidated the suffering public, and the arrest of local leaders. The citizens of Calcutta, for their own self-defence and in order to co-operate with Government, also formed a Civil Guard to prevent the interruption of public utility services in the event of *hartals*.

*Hartals*, i.e., the closing of shops and the general stoppage of business at the dictation of the non-co-operators, by way of demonstration against Government, were a continued feature of the campaign. An attempt to boycott in this way the visit of His Royal High-

ness the Duke of Connaught, who came in January 1921 to open the new Legislative Council was a failure but a *hartal* proclaimed in November 1921 on the day on which His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales landed at Bombay paralyzed the public life of Calcutta. An attempt to boycott the visit of the Prince to Calcutta a month later was frustrated by the activity of the police and the Civil Guard above mentioned in spite of the unscrupulous tactics of the non-cooperators who among other things hired mill hands and others to parade the streets and court arrest in the hope that Government might be embarrassed by the jails being crowded beyond their capacity.

Attempts to tamper with the loyalty of the police also failed but more success attended the attack on colleges and schools. Nearly all the colleges in Calcutta had to be closed temporarily largely in order that the students might be removed to saner influences in their homes. About 50 000 students were diverted to so-called national schools all staffed and all equipped. Disillusion soon came to those who had listened to the non-cooperators when the national colleges glibly promised by them failed to materialize.

Other manifestations of the movement were opposition to village self-government in one district and to settlement operations in two others but the most remarkable was the effect on convicts in jails. The rumour spread that British rule was about to end and that all prisoners were to be released. Conspiracies to anticipate that consummation were hatched and in a few cases were carried out at the Rajshahi Central Jail no less than over 660 prisoners forced the jail gates and escaped in a body. The boycott of foreign goods was a failure. The people had had experience of the futility of such a boycott during the agitation following the Partition of Bengal, and spectacular bonfires of foreign cloth were rare.

The non-co-operators were also responsible for a number of industrial strikes organized for purely political purposes, in particular, their machinations in 1921 resulted in strikes on the steamer and railway services in Eastern Bengal as part of a *hartal* proclaimed in connection with an exodus of deluded coolies from tea gardens in Sylhet, which they had engineered.

**Strikes and trade unions.**—Strikes in 1921 became increasingly numerous. There



were altogether 142 strikes in Bengal involving 212 000 employes of which only half were due to labour grievances *e g* in regard to wages and conditions of work They were also numerous in Bihar and Orissa where too they were to a large extent organized for purely political purposes by the non-co-operation party in pursuance of its policy of creating general unrest Partly also they were due to the fact that the employes having been successful in the strikes of the previous year when their demands were reasonable over estimated their power and began to strike on the most trivial grounds In one case men struck because they had not been rewarded for refusing to strike so at the instance of a political agitator they only resumed work when he promised to take up their case In another the appearance of a few elephants in the coal mining area was a contributory cause of a strike for it was given out that they were the vanguard of a Gandhi army on the march to Calcutta

The case with which labour is exploited for political purpose is explained by the fact that the labour force in the great manufactures and industries is almost all uneducated ignorant and credulous Trade unions have

been started, but most have been bodies formed *ad hoc*, mere strike committees, which die a natural death when the immediate cause of their origin disappears. They have even in some cases been bodies brought together under the name of trade unions which order strikes simply because they have an idea that strikes are connected with trade unions. Very often they have no definite constitution and no system of getting contributions from their members. Owing to the paucity of educated men among the workers, their officials have mostly been outsiders working for ulterior motives, political rather than economic. There are, however, exceptions, for some trade unions have been formed, mainly in connection with the railways, tramways and employment at sea, which approach labour problems from the economic point of view, and which show signs of proper organization and permanence.

Trade union congresses have been started; one was held at Jherria in 1921 and another at Calcutta next year. The former showed the infection of politics, for resolutions were passed in favour of *Swaraj*, the use of *swadeshi* or Indian goods and the adoption of Mr Gandhi's scheme for the general use of the

spinning wheel to bring about the weaving of home-made cloth and drive English piece-goods out of the market

**Non-co-operation in Bihar and Orissa.**—In the province of Bihar and Orissa the non-co-operation movement was more widespread violent and dangerous than in Bengal. It is noticeable that Bihar remained quiet during the revolutionary conspiracy which had its home in Bengal but was now far more disturbed. In this province incidents of the campaign were raids on police-stations riots and the burning down in broad daylight of an indigo factory in North Bihar by a mob of several thousands. Racial animosity against Europeans was also marked. The visit of the Prince of Wales to Patna at the end of 1921 was the occasion of a *hartal*. Every shop in the city was closed no vehicles plying for hire the main thoroughfares were almost empty and there was no crowd to line the streets down which the Prince's procession passed. This manifestation of discourtesy and disloyalty so alien to Indian traditions shows the power the non-co-operators were able to exercise over a peaceful people easily bullied and coerced by a comparatively small but

organized and determined body. It is also eloquent of the extraordinary change which had taken place since 1906 when the visit of the present King and Queen as Prince and Princess of Wales led to the suspension of the fierce agitation then raging over the Partition of Bengal, and was greeted with an outburst of loyalty, which seemed to hush even the forces of militant sedition.

Even the aborigines were affected by the movement and in curious way. The rumour spread that Mr Gandhi had been, or was about to be, enthroned as King. The belief was entertained that a new *Raj* was imminent under which the eating of flesh and the drinking of spirits would be prohibited. Many aborigines in Ranchi rushed to market and sold their goats and sheep for fabulously low prices.

Nothing perhaps is more significant of the lengths to which the non-co-operators were prepared to go than the excesses committed in connexion with the anti-liquor campaign which they started. This attracted support because of its temperance character, but the object of its promoters was merely to embarrass Government by reducing the revenue. The absence of any real reforming idea is

sufficiently apparent from the fact that the ignorant masses were told that temporary abstinence would help to usher in a new *Raj* under which excise fees would be abolished and liquor would be free. Many liquor shops were burnt down and others plundered. The weapon of social boycott was ruthlessly used by interfering with the burials of persons connected either with the excise administration or the liquor trade and the corpse of a distillery proprietor was removed from the grave and its head mutilated.

**The decline of the non co operation movement** —The non-co-operation movement declined after 1922 owing to the arrest and imprisonment of Mr Gandhi, proceedings taken against local leaders guilty of lawlessness and the break up of organizations pursuing methods of intimidation and violence.

Mr Gandhi who had published a seditious article was prosecuted on a charge of sedition to which he pleaded guilty and sentenced to six years simple imprisonment. He was released early in 1924 on medical grounds after an operation for appendicitis. His arrest and imprisonment served to prick the bubble of his

reputation as a supernatural being, while the assertion of authority by Government had a most salutary effect. His position had in any case become impossible by this time. The great majority of the people were becoming sick of the violence and excesses of the non-co-operation movement. His authority had been impaired by dissension and communal differences between Hindus and Muhammadans, especially after the Moplah rebellion in Madras. The Khilafat party had their faith shaken by the failure of the non-co-operation movement to secure the fulfilment of their aims, and on the other hand the representations of the Government of India on behalf of Turkey gratified Moslem sentiment. Lastly, there was a growing sense of disillusion, as the promises of *Swaraj* held out by Mr Gandhi failed to materialize.

**The meaning of *Swaraj*.—**The fluidity of the term *Swaraj* and its shifting connotation have been lucidly explained by Professor Rushbrook Williams in *India in 1922-23*. "This word, which had previously been understood to mean self-government, was permitted by Mr Gandhi to bear a variety of

interpretations It shortly became a mirror of many facets wherein each section of opinion could behold the image of its own desires To some it represented Mr Gandhi's own ideal of government of the self Others read into it Dominion home rule to another party it represented complete independence yet others interpreted it as Muslim supremacy Above all to the masses suffering under a series of bad harvests, further aggravated by rising prices and low wages it shortly became synonymous with the commencement of a golden age when prices should fall when taxation should cease and when the State should refrain from interfering with the good pleasure of each individual man Nor was Mr Gandhi himself more definite in his interpretation for he knew well that any attempt at precision would be accompanied by the withdrawal of one or more sections of opinion upon whose assistance he was relying At one time he explained Swaraj as responsible government whether within or without the Empire at another time as Dominion Home Rule Later he defined it as the universal employment of the spinning wheel yet again he identified it with the triumph of the Khilafat party All his inconsistency governed his

statement as to the date on which the desirable consummation was to be achieved. He foreshadowed it successively for September 1st, 1921, for October 1st, 1921; for October 30th, 1921, for December 31st, 1921, until finally he pessimistically declared that he could fix no date. The passage of December 31st, 1922 without the introduction of the millennium marked the beginning of the decline of Mr. Gandhi's influence among the unlettered masses."

### **Revival of the revolutionary movement.—**

In 1923, with the decline of the non-co-operation movement there was a recrudescence of the revolutionary movement in Bengal. This had been quiescent for some years. It had been scotched, though not killed, by the firm administration of Lord Ronaldshay's Government and by the judicious use of Regulation III of 1818 and the Defence of India Act. Under the terms of royal clemency contained in a proclamation issued by the King in December 1919 all those interned under the latter Act were released from restraint and an amnesty was extended to the leaders imprisoned under the Regulation. Subsequently the revolutionaries were absorbed by



the non-co-operation movement or were diverted from criminal courses by Mr Gandhi's doctrines. In 1921 many of the special Acts passed to restrain their activities were repealed by the Legislative Assembly. Even then however there was the danger of a recrudescence of secret anarchical associations and there was evidence that Bolshevik emissaries had entered India.

In 1923 the revolutionary party again raised its head and a conspiracy was formed by persons who were in correspondence with communist agencies directed by organizations outside India. There was a journalistic campaign in vernacular newspapers glorifying the former revolutionaries and idealizing those who had committed murders and outrages. Dacoities of the old type accompanied by murder were committed in order to raise funds and an organization was started to assassinate police officers. There was in the words of the Governor of Bengal Lord Lytton "a conspiracy of dangerous fanatical criminals amongst whom violence is an acknowledged creed and terrorism a deliberate policy whose agents are trained in robbery and murder and who constitute a danger to every household in the country."

Action against its leaders was taken by the Government under Regulation III of 1818, which had not been repealed with other repressive laws in 1921, as the Moplah rebellion had shown the unwisdom of abandoning this weapon of defence against conspiracy and rebellion. Early in 1924 an English gentleman was assassinated in one of the streets of Calcutta in mistake for the Commissioner of Police.

It is symptomatic of the perverse attitude of the more extreme politicians in Bengal that the Bengal Provincial Conference passed a resolution which, while denouncing violence and declaring that the murder was a misguided act and inimical to the best interests of the country, rendered homage to the self-sacrifice of the murderer and applauded the ideal of self-sacrifice which inspired him. A commentary on the ignorance of the lower classes, and consequentially their unfitness for self-government, was afforded a few days later when rioting, resulting in the death of several Sikhs, broke out in Calcutta in consequence of rumours that Sikh workmen engaged in excavating new docks there were kidnapping Muhammadan children for human sacrifice.

**The Swarajist party, 1923-24** —The embargo on participation in the elections to the legislatures which had been self imposed on members of the non-co-operation party was raised in 1923. A minority clung to the policy of non-co-operation as best calculated to accelerate a change in the form of government but others recognizing that the legislatures afforded a more profitable sphere for their activities abandoned it. A strong party appeared known as Swarajists from the goal of their efforts viz *Swaraj* or full self-government. They published a manifesto instinct with the spirit of obstructiveness. Not only were the members pledged not to accept office a pledge which was acted up to when the Governor of Bengal offered a Ministry to their leader in Bengal (Mr C R Das). They were also pledged to 'a policy of uniform continuous and consistent obstruction within the Legislative Councils in order to make government through those bodies impossible in the event of Government failing to accept and fulfil their demands.

In the Legislative Assembly the demand was made in 1924 that the Government of India Act should be revised with a view to

establish full responsible government, and that a representative "round table" conference should be summoned to devise a scheme of a new constitution, which should be laid before a newly elected legislature and then submitted to Parliament. Hopes were entertained of a sympathetic response in England for the Labour party under Mr Ramsay Macdonald had just formed a government and Labour members had expressed themselves in favour of Home Rule for India. Mr Ramsay Macdonald himself had written in 1918 that in his opinion Home Rule had become inevitable and that the Indian people must become the custodians of their own welfare, the two essentials in his view being that the Viceroy's Council must be of the nature of a Cabinet responsible to representative authorities and that India must have control of her own finances.

The Labour Government, uncertain of its retention of office, was not prepared to accept the demand of the Swarajists. It held that the establishment of full responsible government would be fraught with disaster to the people of India at this stage, three years only after the introduction of the reformed scheme of government and when the purposes which

that scheme was designed to fulfil had not been frustrated by the non co-operation movement. Before the question of radically amending the constitution could be considered there must be an investigation of any defects or difficulties which had arisen in its working. This investigation was to be conducted by the Government of India in consultation with local governments. The Act in brief might only be modified so as to remove working defects.

In spite of this refusal of its demand the Swarajist party did not launch out on the career of intransigence and obstructiveness foreshadowed in its manifesto. It contented itself with a summary rejection of the budget demands for customs, income tax, salt and opium, four of the main revenue-earning departments of Government and of the Finance Bill prescribing the rates at which taxation should be levied under some of the most important heads such as the salt duty, income tax and postage. This however was done with the full knowledge that the Viceroy must exercise the special powers vested in him in order to enable the administration to be carried on and to provide sufficient funds to enable the budget to be balanced. As a matter

of course the necessary steps in this direction were taken by him. The action of the Swarajists was intended to be a protest against the existing system of government and the refusal to revise the constitution. It was an imitation of the time-honoured constitutional device of refusal of supplies in order to draw attention to, or obtain the redress of, grievances, with the essential difference that supplies could in fact not be refused.

A similar political gesture was made by Swarajists on the Legislative Council in Bengal. They succeeded in rejecting all the budget demands for reserved subjects, with the exception of the demand for police and some miscellaneous items, and the Governor restored the rejected demands with one minor exception. The same explanation cannot be given the refusal, by one vote, of salaries to Ministers and of the rejection of two demands for necessary grants on the transferred side, the result in one case being to reduce the educational inspecting staff to such an extent as almost to jeopardize the system of educational administration. This action appears to have been inspired by lack of responsibility and of balance of judgement.

In making their demand for an immediate and radical revision of the constitution, so as to secure full self-government, the Swarajists declared that they desired India to remain within the British Empire. They also claimed that the people of India had an inherent right to frame their own constitution and that this constitution need not be on Western lines. Their leader Pandit Moti Lal Nehru declared: "You assume too much when you say to us: 'You people of India, will have to train yourselves in parliamentary institutions before you aspire to have parliamentary rights. Your conceptions of parliamentary duties, parliamentary rights and parliamentary procedure may be quite different to what the genius of the people might dictate to its representatives.'"

"I do not want a system that is not native to India. What I want the round table conference to determine is a system which is native to India and of which you have no experience in Europe and America. Your experience of centuries of Europe and America will not avail you in the least to find out what system is native to India."

The leader of the Swarajists took his stand on the doctrine of "self-determination" without reference to proved capacity for self-government or the criterion laid down by Parliament in the preamble to the Government of India Act, 1919, *viz*, that the time and manner of each advance to responsible government could be determined only by Parliament, which must be guided by the co-operation received from the people of India and by the extent to which was found that confidence could be reposed in their sense of responsibility. He set up another standard. There was, he declared, a deep-seated desire for *Swaraj* in the country proceeding from the natural cravings of the human heart for freedom. "That being so," he said "the first and last requisite for full responsible government is completely established." A genuine desire for self-government, and a determination to attain that desire, was "all that entitles a nation, all that has ever entitled a nation, to complete self-government and complete responsibility."

**Suspension of the dyarchic system.**—After the refusal of their salaries by the Bengal Legislative Council, mentioned on a



previous page the Ministers continued in office without any salaries. There were now only two Ministers the third had been unseated on an election petition and failed to get re-elected and no appointment was made by the Governor in his place. The demand for the Ministers salaries was resubmitted to the Council in August 1924 and again rejected by it. The Ministers then resigned the Governor of Bengal assumed charge of the transferred Departments and the diarchic system was temporarily suspended. The view taken by the Bengal Government of the situation thus created was expressed in the following words in a communiqué which it issued. The action of the Legislative Council has had the effect of suspending the working of the Reforms in Bengal for the time being. It is not now possible for the Governor to obtain the services of any Ministers. The constitution which has been deliberately suspended by the legislature both conferred privileges and imposed obligations and the existence of Ministers responsible to the legislature was an essential feature of the whole scheme. That essential feature having been destroyed the people of Bengal have through the action

of their representatives temporarily lost the advantages which Parliament intended to confer upon them " It remains to add that charges of organized corruption against the Swarajist party were common The Secretary of State for India, speaking in the House of Lords in July 1924, declared that in the Bengal Legislative Council "the *Swaraj* party, not being able actually to lead or to procure a majority of votes for the purpose of embarrassing the Government organized the purchase for cash of the requisite balances either of votes or abstentions to enable them to win the narrow divisions which they did "

**Renewed revolutionary activity.**—In September 1924 the situation in Bengal made it necessary for the Viceroy, in exercise of his emergency powers, to issue an Ordinance supplementing the ordinary criminal law in Bengal in order to suppress revolutionary crime The Ordinance suspended trial by jury in cases of terrorist conspiracy and provided for the appointment of three special commissioners for the trial of such cases, their orders being subject to appeal to the High Court It was announced that in the

course of the year conspirators had attempted to assassinate police officers high Government officials and members of their own organizations whom they suspected of giving information to the authorities They had manufactured a new and highly dangerous type of bomb and had secured considerable quantities of arms and ammunition of foreign manufacture The resolution of the Bengal Provincial Conference mentioned on a previous page had had an electrical effect and constituted a standing incitement to Bengali youths to adopt violent methods The terrorism of witnesses and juries the failure of juries through fear to return verdicts in accordance with the evidence the murder of witnesses and persons who had confessed or turned King's evidence and the fear of witnesses to disclose facts within their knowledge all combined to render justice unobtainable under the existing law

## PART II.

### CHAPTER XXI.

#### The Settlement of the Frontiers.

**The Gurkha conquest of Nepal.**—While the British were establishing their ascendancy in Bengal and Bihar, a new and aggressive power was springing up in Nepal, where the Gurkhas under Prithwi Narayan spread eastward overrunning the ancient Newar principalities. The latter had no combination for defence, whereas the Gurkhas were an organized military nation and Prithwi Narayan had drilled and disciplined his troops on the British model.

**First relations with the Gurkhas.**—For centuries past the Tarai, *i.e.*, the forest-covered country at the foot of the Himalayas, had been contested by hill chiefs and Rajas or zamindars of the plains, between whom there was a predatory border warfare handed down from father to son. As the Gurkhas overthrew each hill chieftain, they took over his claims on the lowlands and his feuds with his

lowland neighbours. The Mughals did not intervene except in 1763 when Mir Kasim Ali attempted an invasion of Nepal from Bettiah. His army, however, failed to get through the passes and was driven back in rout. Two years later the subjugation of the petty hill chieftdom of Makwanpur brought the Gurkha conquests up to the boundary of North Bihar, and Prithwi Narayan proceeded to seize not only some land in the Tarai which the Raja of Makwanpur had claimed but also some 22 villages in what is now the district of Champaran.

**Expedition into Nepal**—In 1767 the Newar Raja of Katmandu appealed to the British for help against the Gurkhas. It seemed a favourable opportunity for intervention, for it was feared that the trade with Nepal already interrupted by the annexation of Makwanpur would be ruined if the Gurkhas conquered the Nepal Valley round Katmandu—a practical demonstration of the aptness of the Nepalese saying, "With the merchant comes the market." An expedition was accordingly despatched under Major Kinloch but it never reached its objective the Nepal Valley. The force too small in the first

instance, was further reduced by sickness, for it set out at the most unhealthy time of the year and its operations lay in malaria-infested valleys, and it returned in two months' time. All that it was able to do was to occupy the Tarai, which was held for two years in order to recoup the expense of the campaign. Eventually, after patient investigation of the Gurkha claims, Warren Hastings restored to them in 1781 the Makwanpur villages in the Tarai, for which they paid the same tribute as the Raja of Makwanpur, *viz*, an elephant every year, but retained the 22 villages which Prithwi Narayan had seized.

**Treaties with Nepal.**—In 1769, with the capture of Katmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon, the Gurkha conquest of Nepal was complete. The restless Gurkhas now carried their arms far to the east, occupied a great part of Sikkim and advanced into Tibet, sacking, among others, the chief Sikkim monastery at Pemion-chi and the great Tibetan monastery of Tashi-lunpo. At the former place they committed the vandalism of using Buddhist scriptures, which they rifled from the temple, as soles for their shoes. The Emperor of China, as suzerain of Tibet and protector of the

Buddhist faith sent an army of about 12 000 men which drove the Gurkhas back and in 1792 despite the enormous distance from its base penetrated within 25 miles of Katmandu. The Gurkhas sued for peace and saved their capital by acknowledging Chinese suzerainty. In 1792 anxious to secure British support against the Chinese they entered into a commercial treaty which proved to be a dead letter. It was supplemented in 1801 by a treaty concluded at Dinapore, under which the establishment of a Residency at Katmandu was agreed to the arrest and surrender of dacoits who infested the border was provided for and the tribute of an elephant for the lowlands of Mahwanpur was remitted. This treaty was no more effectual than its predecessors and was dissolved by Lord Wellesley in 1804 in consequence of constant breach of their engagements by the Nepales and indignities to the Resident.

**War with Nepal, 1814-16** —For several years after this the Gurkhas made constant and systematic encroachments on British territory. The Company was committed to a

policy of non-intervention, and its only response was a series of unavailing remonstrances and futile efforts to get the Nepalese to co-operate in keeping the peace along the border, which was harried by bands of banditti. By 1813, when the Marquess of Hastings became Governor-General, the Gurkhas, who claimed that they were merely following the same policy as had gained the British their power in India, had established their rule in the Himalayas from the Sutlej on the west to the Tista on the east. They had held the Morang, or Tarai country north of Purnea, since 1788, when they crossed the river Kosi and assassinated the fugitive Raja of the Morang, who had fled to Purnea for refuge. The Collector of Tirhut complained that between 1787 and 1813 they had seized over 200 villages, among which were the 22 villages retaken by Kınloch. To the west they had occupied a tract in Gorakhpur which had been ceded to the British by the Nawab Vizier of Oudh.

One of the first acts of Lord Hastings after his assumption of office was to send a peremptory demand for the evacuation of this tract. The Gurkhas thought lightly of the British military power after the failure of General Lake to capture Bharatpur in 1805.



and were convinced that their hill fastnesses were impregnable. They refused to evacuate and war was declared in November 1814. Several columns advanced at different points in the 600 miles of frontier stretching from the Sutlej to the Kosi. They found the enemy far more formidable than they had ever expected. The sepoys were accustomed to easy victories over undisciplined levies; they made the mistake of despising their enemy, and they were unaccustomed to hill warfare. The Gurkhas had the advantage of holding the passes from the plains; they were inured to fighting by many years of war and they fought with impetuous bravery.

The plan of campaign provided for the main attack being delivered through the passes between the Great Gandak and Bagmati rivers by a force of 8 000 men under General Marley. The advance of this column was held up. General Marley appears to have lost his head and took the extraordinary step of leaving his command on the eve of his supersession. General Ochterlony, however, advancing by way of the Sutlej, had a series of brilliant successes while a force of irregular levies raised from among the warlike Rohillas occupied Almora. The Gurkhas who had not

expected that such large forces would be put into the field, were ready to give in by November 1815, when a treaty was signed at Sugauli in the Champaran district.

The war party among the Gurkhas, now re-apparently because the gained the upper hand, cession of the Tarai, treaty provided for the of their dominions, in the most valuable part of the Court held which moreover many refused to ratify the estates. The Durbar refused. The campaign treaty and the war continued. The decisive Ochterlony of 1816 was short and of the main army, was placed in command, which invaded Nepal consisting of 20,000 men secured a position from Champaran and. The Gurkhas, re-attempting threatening Katmandu, was hopeless, signed realizing that the struggle under which they ceded the peace of Sugauli, thus acquiring the hills Kumaon (the British hill stations of Simla, now occupied by the home), abandoned all Naini Tal and Mussoorie of the Tarai, with-claims to the greater part agreed to the establish-drew from Sikkim, and Katmandu ment of a Residency at one of the most serious

The war had been one British, there being as yet undertaken by them in the field, 33,000 at one time 47,000 men.

regulars and 14 000 irregulars. Its result was to prevent the establishment of an aggressive military power along the whole northern frontier of the Company's possessions which would have made itself master of Sikhim, Bhutan and the Himalayas eastward. As it was the Gurkhas had carried their arms for nearly a thousand miles through the Himalayas and the forests at their base. They were now hemmed in and prevented from further aggrandizement. The ill-defined frontier was delimited and the Gurkhas themselves began to take service in the Indian army three battalions of them being raised at the suggestion of Ochterlony.

So far as Bengal and Bihar were concerned, a secure boundary was obtained, as the whole Tarai between the Gandak and Kosi rivers and between the Mechi and Tista was surrendered. The treaty was faithfully observed except for a brief lapse in 1840 when a Nepalese detachment entered Champaran and proclaimed the annexation of a tract lying within the estate of the Raja of Ramnagar. A brigade was ordered up whereupon the Nepaleses evacuated 91 villages which they had seized.

**First treaty with Sikkim.**—The Nepal war saved Sikkim from being converted into a province of Nepal, which agreed never to molest or disturb the Raja of Sikkim in the possession of his territory but to refer any disputes with him to the arbitration of the British Government. He was shorn, however, of a large part of his territories, for the Gurkhas retained their conquests between the Tambur river and the present eastern boundary of Sikkim, while the land between the Mechi and Tista rivers, an area of 4,000 square miles, was ceded to the British by the treaty of Sugauli. The latter tract was, however, restored to the Raja by a treaty concluded in 1817 at Titalya (in the Jalpaiguri district), by which also the Raja agreed to refer to the Government of India any disputes with Nepal or any other neighbouring State. Sikkim, which at this time included Darjeeling and, in fact, the whole country from the snowy mountains to the plains, thus became a buffer State between Nepal and Bhutan.

**Cession of Darjeeling.**—In 1828, in pursuance of the treaty, Lord William Bentinck deputed two officers, Captain (afterwards

General) Lloyd and Mr Grant, the Commercial Resident at Malda to enquire into a frontier dispute with Nepal. Both were struck with the possibilities of Darjeeling as a hill sanitarium and urged that steps should be taken to acquire it. Not only would it be a sanitarium but a good trade centre while it was of strategic importance as the key of passes into Nepal and Bhutan. It had moreover been abandoned by its small Lepcha population. Lloyd wrote that— If this part of the country was re-umed by us or ceded to the chief and people who have emigrated would instantly return and, as he is very tyrannical I don't suppose a single Lepcha would remain subject to the Sikkim Raja. The Court of Directors approved the idea for they realized that a military depot for European troops could be established in the cool climate of Darjeeling. Negotiations were opened with the Sikkim Raja who, in 1835 largely owing to Lloyd's personal influence with him made a free grant of Darjeeling and its neighbourhood to the Governor General on account of its cool climate for the purpose of enabling the servants of his Government suffering from sickness to avail themselves of its advantages. The non official

will be noticed, was not considered. In return the Raja was given a few years later an annual allowance of Rs 3,000, which was afterwards raised to Rs 6,000.

Darjeeling at this time was of no value to Sikkim. In fact, it was described as a worthless uninhabited mountain, its few inhabitants had been forced by the Raja's oppression to fly to Nepal and according to a contemporary, it had never yielded the Raja as much as Rs 20 a year. Under British administration it progressed like a young Australian colony. Its inaccessibility was removed by roads laid out by Lord Napier of Magdala, then a young lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. Immigrants from Nepal and Sikkim, as well as from the plains of India, flocked in to clear the forest and till the slopes under the even-handed justice of the first Superintendent, Dr Campbell. Forced labour was abolished and the cultivation of tea, which was to be the making of the district, was introduced.

**Annexation of the Tarai.**—Rapid as was its progress, the continued prosperity of Darjeeling was threatened by the hostility of

Sikkim The Raja of that State, wrapt in religious contemplation, withdrew from worldly affairs and left everything to his Diwan or Minister a corrupt and avaricious official. The Diwan had a monopoly of trade which suffered from the competition of Darjeeling as he lost the slaves who took refuge there, and he tried to make the loss good by kidnapping British subjects and selling them into slavery.

Every obstacle wrote Sir Joseph Hooker, was thrown in the way of a good understanding between Sikkim and the British Government. British subjects were rigorously excluded from Sikkim every liberal offer for free trade and intercourse was rejected generally with insolence merchandise was taxed and notorious offenders refugees from the British territories were harboured despatches were detained and the vakeels or Raja's representative were chosen for their insolence and inactivity. The conduct of the Diwan throughout was Indo-Chinese assuming insolent aggressive never perpetrating open violence but by petty insults effectually preventing all good understanding. He was met with neglect or forbearance on the part of the Calcutta Government and by patience and passive resistance at Darjeeling. Our inaction

and long suffering were taken for weakness and our concessions for timidity ”

It used to be a common practice among the tribes on the frontiers of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan to enforce demands on their neighbours by capturing their representatives and keeping them in durance vile until they capitulated. In 1849 the Diwan precipitated a crisis by resorting to this device. Dr Campbell, who was in charge of the political relations with Sikkim, had gone there in order, if possible, to come to a better understanding with the Raja and his officers, with him was travelling Sir Joseph Hooker, the distinguished botanist, who was engaged in a scientific exploration of the country. Both were seized and kept prisoners for six weeks. Campbell was subjected to violence and gross indignities while the Diwan endeavoured to extort from him a new treaty more to his taste than that of 1817 with its obnoxious article providing for the surrender of criminals who took refuge in Sikkim. He was foiled by Campbell's declaration that the British Government would repudiate any terms extorted by force. Lord Dalhousie threatened



that if a hair of the head of either prisoner were injured the Raja's head would answer for it. The Diwan became alarmed at the possible consequences of his action and released his captives.

Next year a small force crossed the boundary but no further advance was attempted as the military authorities had an exaggerated idea of the dangers of an invasion. As a matter of fact the Raja had no troops with which to oppose an advance according to Hooker there were not 50 muskets in the country nor 20 men able to use them. There was however no need of any force for the execution of the punitive measure determined upon. This consisted of the annexation of a slice of territory on the north of Darjeeling and of the Tarai belonging to Sikkim on the south. It was merely necessary for four policemen to take over the Raja's treasury in the Tarai which contained the meagre sum of Rs. 6 and to announce the annexation to the inhabitants who were delighted at the change. The result was to confine the Raja to a mountainous hinterland access to which from the plains lay through British territory. The new country was added to the Darjeeling district the boundary of which now marched on

the west with Nepal and on the east with Bhutan, which then contained the present Kalimpong subdivision

**Invasion of Sikkim, 1861.**—The Diwan had been dismissed in disgrace, the Tibetans warning him that if he made any further trouble with the British, he would be dragged with a rope round his neck to Pekin, there to receive condign punishment from the Emperor of China. In a few years, however, he worked his way back to power, the old Raja, who lived mostly in the Chumbi Valley, was a more upher, and the former outrages were renewed. Raids were made on British territory, British subjects were kidnapped, all redress was refused. It was realized that sterner measures were necessary. A small expedition of 200 men under Dr Campbell advanced a short way into Sikkim, but had to fall back for want of ammunition. A force of 2,600 men then invaded Sikkim under Colonel Gawler and took the village of Tumlong, which was then the capital. The old Raja abdicated in favour of his son and a new treaty was drawn up, which prohibited kidnapping and slavery, secured full freedom for trade and provided for the banishment of the

Diwan whose conduct had earned for him the sobriquet of Pagla Diwan or the mad minister

**The Tibetan invasion of Sikkim, 1888 —**  
 From the shelter of the Chumbi Valley the Diwan carried on intrigues with the Tibetans and continued to be the evil genius of Sikkim. The new Raja who succeeded in 1874 was under his influence and made a secret treaty declaring that Sikkim was subject to China and Tibet. The attitude of the Tibetans at this time was one of distrust and suspicion of the Government of India. Warren Hastings had entered into friendly relations with them despatching George Bogle as an emissary to the Tashi Lama (at Tashilumpo near Shigatse) in 1774 and Samuel Turner in 1783. The latter obtained an agreement allowing Indian traders recommended by the Governor General to trade at Shigatse. But the attitude of the Tibetans changed after 1791 when Tibet was invaded by the Gurkhas who as already stated were only driven out with the aid of the Chinese the suzerains of Tibet. The Tibetans in the entirely mistaken belief that the invasion was encouraged by the Government of India forbade the admission of

any of the people of Bengal, and Tibet became a closed land.

For some time past the Government of India had been endeavouring to reopen trade with Tibet, and with' this object a mountain road suitable for mule traffic was built through Sikkim up to the Tibetan frontier on the pass called the Jelep La, 14,300 feet above sea-level In 1885 Mr Colman Macaulay, Secretary to the Bengal Government, proceeded to Pekin and obtained permission from the Chinese Government for a Mission to go to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, and there confer with the Chinese Resident and the Tibetan Government regarding the admission of Indian traders into Tibet and the removal of restrictions on the trade through Sikkim and Darjeeling The Mission started in 1886 under Mr Macaulay, only to be stopped at the frontier by the Tibetans acting under orders from the Chinese It was then abandoned, because the Government of India was anxious to conciliate the Chinese, as their susceptibilities had recently been aroused by the British annexation of Upper Burma and the Burmese frontier was under delimitation

The Tibetans, ascribing the withdrawal of the Mission to timidity now took the aggressive. In 1886 they advanced 12 m into Sikkim occupied Lingtu a bleak ridge 12 500 feet high on the road to the Jelep built a fort there and blocked all trade with Tibet. There they stayed till 1888 while fruitless negotiations were carried on with China. The patience of the Government of India being at last exhausted a force of 1 men with two guns under General Grat stormed the position drove the Tibetans from Sikkim and established a camp at Gnathang near the Jelep La. During a visit of Lieutenant Governor Sir Stuart Bayley, Tibetans attacked Gnathang in force probably with the idea of capturing him but being repulsed with heavy loss they retired across the Jelep La.

In September 1893 an army of the Tibetans over 11 000 strong again advanced across the Jelep La and seized the Taku La a ridge above Gnathang where they built a stone wall two to three miles long and three to four feet high in the extraordinarily short time of a single night. The wall was carried by a British force of 2 000 men in an action fought at an altitude of 13 500 feet and the Tibetans

fled in rout. Next day the British marched as far as Rinchingong in the Chumbi Valley without any resistance being offered.

Hostilities were terminated by the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, by which the Chinese, who had long claimed suzerainty over Sikkim, acknowledged the British protectorate and the exclusive control of Great Britain over the internal administration and foreign relations of Sikkim. The Raja of Sikkim then tried to fly to Tibet through Nepal but was stopped by the Nepalese and handed over to the British, who kept him a State prisoner at Kurseong. The convention was supplemented in 1893 by trade regulations, which provided for a British mart being started at Yatung a village below the Jelep La in a ravine leading into the Chumbi Valley. Since 1890 a British Political Officer has been posted at Gangtok, the new capital. The control over Sikkim remained with the Government of Bengal till 1906, when it was transferred to the Government of India.

**The Tibet expedition, 1904.**—The Tibetans refused to recognise the Convention and continued an obstinate policy of obstruction. Tibet remained a closed land. Traders were

not allowed to go to Yatung where a wall was built across the ravine to prevent their entrance pillars erected to mark the frontier were pulled down and the Tibetans encroached on the extreme north of Sikkim at Gyang where they erected block houses, from which they had to be expelled in 1902. The Dalai Lama moreover the spiritual and temporal ruler of Tibet entered into intrigues with the Russians and it was necessary to prove to him that the intervention of a foreign power would not be tolerated. Negotiations failed owing to the obstructive tactics of the Tibetans and Chinese. When the Government of India applied to Tibet they either received no reply or were referred to the Chinese Resident. If they applied to the latter he excused his failure by his inability to put any pressure upon Tibet. This solemn farce they declared was re-enacted with a frequency that seemed never to deprive it of its attractions or its power to impose. For some months the British Commissioner Colonel (afterwards Sir Frederick) Young, his band stayed at Khamba Jong the nearest fort on the Tibetan side of the frontier but had to withdraw without being able to effect a settlement. An expedition was then sent into

Tibet by the Chumbi Valley under General Macdonald with Sir Frederick Younghusband in political charge

In April 1904 an advance was made to Gyantse, where the mission was attacked and the British captured the fort dominating the town. After further fighting Lhasa was reached, and there a treaty was signed (1904), by which the Tibetans agreed to receive no representative or agent of a foreign power or to allow the intervention of any foreign power in their affairs and promised to pay an indemnity of £500,000 (Rs 75 lakhs) in 75 instalments. Until the payments were complete the Chumbi Valley was to be occupied by the British.

This treaty was subsequently modified because Great Britain was determined not to annex any part of Tibet, and the occupation of the Chumbi Valley for 75 years was held to be tantamount to annexation. A convention was concluded with the Chinese in 1906<sup>6</sup> by which Great Britain agreed not to annex any part of Tibet or interfere with its internal administration, while China undertook not to permit any foreign power to interfere with Tibet. The period of occupation of the Chumbi was reduced by the



British Government to three years and the indemnity to Rs 25 lakhs. This was paid with money provided by the Chinese, and the valley was evacuated and handed back to the Tibetans in 1908. Since then the relations with Tibet have been good. The Dalai Lama, who had fled before the expedition reached Lhasa and stayed away 5 years was convinced not only of the power but also of the good faith and friendliness of the British so much so that in 1910 when he was a fugitive from the Chinese who sought to deprive him of his temporal power, he took refuge at Darjeeling. Thence he returned to Tibet after the Chinese revolution when the Chinese troops in Tibet cut off from support surrendered to the Tibetans and were deported to China. A few years later the last vestiges of Chinese control were discarded.

**First relations with Bhutan** — When British rule began the Bhutanese were rulers either as overlords or actual occupants of the country from the eastern border of Sikkim as far as Darrang including the Duars (literally the doors) i.e. the passes and lowland country at the base of the Himalayas where they found

a more fertile soil than their own mountains contained. The British first came into contact with Bhutan in 1772 in consequence of a Bhutanese invasion of Cooch Behar, the Raja of which was taken captive. An appeal for help having been made to Warren Hastings, a small British force was despatched, which expelled the Bhutanese and pursued them back into the hills. They, in their turn, appealed to the Tashi Lama of Tashilumpo, who, acting as guardian of the young Dalai Lama, was Regent of Tibet. Owing to his meditation a treaty was concluded in 1774, by which the Bhutanese agreed to pay the British a tribute of five ponies, to refrain from incursions into British territory and to restore the Raja of Cooch Behar. Warren Hastings followed this up in the same year by despatching an emissary, George Bogle, with presents to the Deb Raja, the temporal ruler of Bhutan, as well as to the Tashi Lama. Bogle obtained the consent of the Deb Raja to free trade between Bhutan and the territories of the East India Company.

In 1783 Lieutenant Turner went to Bhutan and Tibet on a mission aiming at the promotion of commercial reciprocity and in

1815 an Indian official, Krishna Kanta Basu, was sent to effect a settlement of border disputes. Otherwise there was practically no intercourse with Bhutan till 1826 when the cession of Assam by the Burmese brought the Company's territories up to the borders of Bhutan. The Bhutanese were undisputed masters of the Bengal Duars from the river Tista to the Manas but they had to pay tribute to the British for the Assam Duars and this caused friction. The Bhutanese raided British territory, the British made reprisals. An attempt was made to secure a *rapprochement* in 1837 when Captain Pemberton was sent on a friendly mission to Bhutan but this hope proved illusory. To such an extent was intercourse with the mission discouraged that some Bhutanese who visited Indian officers belonging to it met with condign punishment. They were says Pemberton, hastened into a salutary disgust of the inconvenient intimacy.

**War with Bhutan, 1864-65** —The depredations of the Bhutanese continued and in 1861 it was necessary to annex the Assam Duars in order to show them that British

territory could not be persistently and wantonly violated with impunity. At the same time an annual payment of Rs 10,000 from the revenues of this tract was promised to the Bhutan Government so long as the peace of the frontier was not disturbed. This moderation on the part of the British Government was misunderstood. Scarcely a year passed without raids, often headed by Bhutanese officials, on British districts and the protected States of Sikkim and Cooch Behar, the people of which were plundered, massacred or carried off as slaves. Remonstrances and threats were met by evasion.

In spite of the provocation it had received through a long series of years, the Government of India was averse to retributive measures and a last effort was made to come to a settlement by means of negotiation. Mr (afterwards Sir) Ashley Eden was sent to Bhutan with a demand for reparation. When, in 1864, he arrived at Punakha, the capital of Bhutan, he found the Deb and Dharma Rajas, the temporal and spiritual rulers of the country, both puppets in the hands of one of the great chieftains, the Tongsa Penlop, as the result of a recent

revolution This potentate rejected all pacific overtures Restitution for the past and security for the future were alike refused He resorted to the old frontier trick of detaining the envoy until his demands were satisfied After being subjected to indignity and insult Ashley Eden was forced under protest to sign a document undertaking that the British would give up the Assam Duars, deliver up all runaway slaves and political refugees and if they ever encroached on Bhutan submit to punishment by the Governments of Bhutan and Cooch Behar The document invoked supernatural terrors as a penal sanction stating solemnly that if any one was false to its terms the demons at the command of the Dharma Raja would take his life extract his liver and scatter it like ashes to the four winds of heaven Sir Ashley Eden who had noted on the document that he signed under compulsion shortly afterwards succeeded in making his escape by night

It is not surprising that this enforced agreement was instantly repudiated by the Viceroy Lord Lawrence who proceeded to annex a Bhutan estate in Jalpaiguri and finally to threaten coercive measures unless

the captives in Bhutan, over three hundred in number, were surrendered and the plunder taken during the last five years was restored. To this demand an evasive reply was returned and war was declared with the announcement that the Bengal Duars would be annexed and as much of the hill territory of Bhutan as might be necessary to command the passes and to prevent incursions into the Darjeeling district or the plains below. By the end of January 1865 these words were made good, the expeditionary force meeting but little opposition. The Bhutanese showed themselves poor fighters unless behind stockades, and their forts were taken with ease. The Deb Raja protested that he had not yet begun fighting and that the British had broken the canons of war, as he knew it, by not giving notice of the date on which war was to begin. If they persisted in the invasion, he threatened to send against them a *corps d'elite* consisting of twelve gods, who were described as being "very ferocious ghosts."

The Bhutanese now started some serious fighting and obtained two successes. The Tongsa Penlop or Governor of the Tongsa province attacked Diwangiri, one of the forts which the British had occupied, and forced

them to evacuate it, another force caused second post to be abandoned. Both places were soon recaptured however, and before the end of the year a treaty was concluded under which Bhutan ceded the territory which the British had occupied viz the Duars and a block of hill territory to the east of the Tista river which constituted all its possessions in the plains as well as a block of mountainous territory to the east of the Tista river. The Western Duars were incorporated in the Jalpaiguri district the Eastern Duars in the Goalpara district of Assam while the hill tract forms the Kalimpong subdivision of the Darjeeling district. As compensation for the loss of revenue from the Duars the most valuable portion of the Bhutan possessions and also as an inducement to keep the peace in future the British Government undertook to pay Bhutan a subsidy rising from Rs 25 000 to Rs 50 000 a year on condition that no further breaches of the peace occurred.

**Subsequent relations with Bhutan** — Since the war peaceable relations have prevailed interrupted only by a raid near Buxa Duar in 1859 and some outrages in Kamrup (A

Assam) in 1889 The absence of trouble and a growing cordiality are due in a large measure to the establishment of a more stable government in Bhutan For fifty years before the Bhutanese war the government of the country was more or less chaotic Nominally, there were two rulers, *viz* , the Dharma Raja and the Deb Raja The former was a spiritual pontiff, who succeeded by reincarnation like the Dalai Lama of Tibet He was regarded as an incarnation of Buddha, and when he died a reincarnation took place a year or two later It was marked by rain falling from a clear sky and by a rainbow appearing above the house in which the infant was born The Deb Raja was the temporal ruler elected by a Council of Chiefs, Lamas and officials In practice there were two dictators, the Tongsa Penlop and the Paro Penlop, the Governors of the provinces in Eastern and Western Bhutan called Tongsa and Paro The Deb Raja was the nominee of whichever Penlop happened to be the more powerful The Paro Penlop nominated a Deb Raja, who was placed on the throne The Tongsa Penlop would then eject him and substitute his own puppet, who would again be ousted by the rival king-maker



into Arakan. Disputes about the extradition of fugitives and their pursuit into British territory were a constant source of friction.

Aggression by the Arakanese exiles continued till about 1815 when it was put a stop to by the vigilance of the British authorities aided by the lack of a popular leader. The Burmese in their turn now began a series of encroachments and attacks on elephant hunters in the Company's service and other British subjects whom they either killed or carried off as slaves. Flushed by long success against weaker neighbours the Burmese had an overweening idea of their power and treated protests with silent contempt or studied insult. On the strength of his position as successor of the kings of Arakan the King of Ava even advanced a claim to the sovereignty of Bengal as far as and including the town of Murshidabad and actually demanded its surrender from the Marquess of Hastings who to save trouble affected to treat the offensive letter of the Burmese King as a forgery. In 1823 they proceeded to seize the island of Shalpur in the mouth of the Naf estuary hitherto an undisputed British possession when driven out they re-occupied it. Further north after conquer-

ing the Ahoms and overrunning Assam, they made inroads into Cachar, then under British protection, and threatened the British district of Sylhet. Their violations of the frontier could no longer be tolerated and war was declared in 1824.

**The first Burmese War, 1824-26.**—The Burmese entered on the war with elation, certain of success, their king even had golden fetters made to bind the Governor-General when he was brought captive to Ava. They had every confidence in their own prowess, and in their skill in entrenching and defending stockades. A spade or hoe was part of the equipment of every Burman soldier, as the line advanced he dug himself in, to use the modern phrase, and cheerfully fired away. The Burmese also were under the impression that their victory would immediately cause a revolt among the people of India, whom they despised, with the cocksureness of ignorance, as men of puny physique destitute of courage. Their troops were, however, of small military value, Sir Thomas Munro, indeed, described them as the best ditchers and stockaders since the time of the Romans, but as a military body little better than an

assemblage of badly armed tank diggers. Their climate was a more formidable enemy.

At the outset the British suffered reverse. The Burmese invaded Chittagong with an army of 10,000 men under the Maha Bandula — or commander in chief, and carried off a detachment of 300 sepoy and a hundred local levies near Ramu. The British, however cautious and irresolute, did not follow up their success but stockpiled themselves and after remaining inactive two months retired on hearing that reinforcements had been collected at Chittagong. The capture of Rangoon by a force from Macao then led to the recall of the Maha Bandula with his army. In the meanwhile the British defeat caused a panic in Eastern Bengal even in the bazars of Calcutta.

**Mutiny at Barrackpore** — The defeat exaggerated by rumour. Strange stories of the difficulties of the campaign and of the formidable character of the enemy were abroad and affected the Bengal army. A mutiny broke out at Barrackpore for the over-estimation of Burma. Several regiments already marched to Chittagong and it was a serious shortage of transport for new

bullocks nor drivers could be hired. A rumour spread that the sepoys, who had enlisted for service only in countries to which they could march, would be shipped across the Bay of Bengal to Rangoon. Those that had been detailed for the campaign vowed that they would not be forced to lose their caste by crossing the sea. All efforts to disabuse their minds were fruitless, and they went further by declaring they would not march except on impossible terms. It was decided to treat one battalion which was the foremost in the mutiny with proper military rigour. On the men still persisting in refusing to march or lay down their arms, they were mown down with grape, and the mutiny was at an end.

**Treaty of Yandabo, 1826.**—A column now advanced from Chittagong and occupied Arakan. Another expedition advanced with gunboats up the Brahmaputra and expelled the Burmese, but could not prevent them carrying off 30,000 Assamese as slaves. In Lower Burma the British troops went on from success to success, and when at length they reached Yandabo, four marches from the capital of Ava, the Burmese accepted

their terms. A treaty was accordingly signed by which the Burmese gave up the provinces of Tenasserim and Arakan, already in occupation of the British and abandoned all claims to Assam. Both Assam and Arakan were attached to and administered as part of Bengal but in 1852 Arakan was formed with other parts of Burma into the province of British Burma and in 1874 Assam was detached from Bengal and constituted a separate province under a Chief Commissioner.

**Tribes on the south east frontier of Bengal**—The pacification of the tribes on the south-east frontier of Bengal has been a difficult task owing to their low level of civilization. Many were almost savages engaged from time immemorial in a life of foray of which head hunting has been a common and unpleasant incident. Mild methods were at one time tried in order to break the evil habits. In former years before our advance into the Lushai country there used to be an annual gathering of the chiefs at Rangamati at which the Deputy Commissioner used to exhort the confiding chiefs to live at peace with his enemies and

return good for evil to those that would unjustly persecute him—copy-book maxims that were backed by presents of coloured blankets and a liberal allowance of rum. These excellent precepts were treated with stoical indifference, the blanket was exchanged for more liquor and the savage, having spied out the land, would return and raid some unsuspecting hamlet putting all except young females to death and reaping a plentiful harvest of heads ”\*

**Tribal Raids.**—Even after the frontier was secure against Burmese aggression, raids by the wild hill tribes were a constant source of trouble. Quarrels with other clans, the desire of plunder, scarcity of women or lack of labour, which could be met by the carrying off of captives, all led to the perpetration of raids, as well as the religious motive of head hunting in order to secure heads to grace the obsequies or marriage feast of a chief. Effective reprisals were difficult. After a foray the marauders retired with their plunder to their hill fastnesses, where pursuit was almost hopeless. Punitive expeditions had

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\* R. H. Sneyd Hutchinson, *District Gazetteer of the Chittagong Hill Tracts*, 1909

to make their way along the beds of torrents, through ravines and in the face of precipices in unknown country against a nimble enemy who avoided open fighting and relied on ambuscades and surprises. Their villages were protected by stockades and caltrops strewn along the jungle paths. When they were reached it was often found that the marauders had slipped away after setting fire to their houses and removing all valuable property.

**The Chittagong Hill Tracts**—The history of our dealings with these tribes is a monotonous record of constantly recurring raids and infructuous punitive expeditions lasting over a century. As early as 1774 the Chief of Chittagong reported to Warren Hastings the incursions of a band of Kukis who were punished by closing to them the markets in the Chittagong district. Gradually the tribes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts were pacified and were left under the rule of their chiefs who paid a tribute in the shape of a tax once a year which eventually took the form of a regular revenue. Forays were however still made on the peaceful denizens of the plain and the offenders seldom met with the punish-

ment which they deserved. In 1860 therefore the hill tracts were brought under direct control and placed in charge of an officer entitled the Superintendent of the Hill Tribes, a title which was changed in 1867 to that of Deputy Commissioner of the Hill Tracts. In 1892 this tract having lost much of its importance after the annexation of the Lushai Hills, it was made a subdivision of Chittagong, but in 1900 it was restored to the status of a district under a Superintendent and the present system was introduced under which there are three circles each under a chief, who is responsible for the collection of revenue and the internal management of the villages.

**Raids from the Lushai Hills.**—As peace and order were established in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, they in turn were exposed to the depredations of independent tribes further east. In 1860 the Hill Tracts were invaded by the Kukis, who descended into the district of Tippera and murdered 186 British subjects and took nearly 100 prisoners. Their chief having made his submission, the Lushais took the war path, and there was a succession of raids on the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Hill Tippera (Tripura), Cachar



and Sylhet. The most serious of these outrages was committed in 1870-71 when a number of tea gardens were attacked, tea planters killed and the daughter of one of them Mary Winchester a girl nine years old was carried off with other prisoners.

An expedition on a larger scale than had hitherto been attempted was sent into the Lushai country. Two columns advanced one from Cachar and the other from Chittagong and taught the Lushais that the British had a long arm which could reach even to their remote villages. Mary Winchester and other captives were surrendered and many of the Lushais chiefs submitted.

The fine imposed on one of the tribes is a curious catalogue eloquent of primitive conditions. It consisted of two elephants tusks, a set of war gongs, a necklace, 10 goats, 10 pigs, 20 fowls and 20 mounds of husked rice.

**Annexation of the Lushai Hills**—After this lesson which was supplemented by the establishment of outposts protecting the boundary of Cachar and Sylhet, there was comparative peace for 18 years. In 1888 the Lushais broke out again. In one raid they captured 101 persons. In another they

surprised and massacred a small survey party under Lt Stewart, R E , which had bivouacked 12 miles from the headquarters of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the heads of the party were taken off to form the marriage portion of the bride of one of the chiefs. In a third raid these coveted trophies were not obtained, the Lushais having only time to scalp their victims.

These outrages served to convince the Government of India that a stronger policy was necessary in dealing with these savages, whose hills had formed an enclave in British territory since the annexation of Upper Burma in 1885. Fortified posts were established in the Lushai Hills, and in 1891 the southern portion was constituted a district, which was administered as part of Bengal. It took some time, however, and required the despatch of more than one expedition to reduce the restless tribes. It was not till 1895 that the final submission of the chiefs was secured. Three years later the South Lushai Hills were transferred to Assam, in which the North Lushai Hills had already been incorporated.

## CHAPTER XXII

### The Aboriginal Tribes

One of the most fascinating but least known chapters in the history of British rule in Bihar and Orissa is that which deals with the pacification of semi savage tribes, the conversion of restless marauders into settled cultivators and the abolition of barbarous customs. This was effected mainly by the personal influence of British officers backed by the display and when necessary, the exercise of force. The first step was to put down violence and rapine to prove that constituted authority was possessed of greater power than lawless ferocity. This was followed by a policy of conciliation by which uncivilized and predatory tribes were won over and brought to realize the advantages of order and obedience. Their good will having been gained they became gradually habituated to the custom of a civilized society and as far as possible they were made the agents of their own civilization.

What has ever the aboriginal tribes have gradually been taught the ways of peace

there have been occasional outbreaks in which they have lapsed into atavistic savagery. These have been caused chiefly by their passionate attachment to the land, the infringement of their prescriptive rights in it and their quickness to take up arms to assert those rights or revenge their wrongs. The history of our relations with some of the tribes, such as the Mundas, Oraons and Santals, though mainly one of tranquillity, is consequently punctuated by impulsive rebellions followed by protective legislation.

**The Paharias of the Rajmahal Hills.**—The salutary effect of the policy sketched above is apparent from the case of the Paharias of the Rajmahal Hills, with whom the British came into contact at an early period of their rule. A primitive race, ignorant of the plough and using sharpened stakes to dig the soil, they eked out their meagre crops by the chase and found a more congenial, though not so regular an occupation in raids on the villages at the foot of the hills. Some of these raids were made in search of plunder—salt, cloth and cattle. Others were made on the invitation of zamindars who desired to despoil their neighbours and share the booty.

with the Paharias. Others again were made in revenge for acts of treachery on the part of the zamindars.

In the period preceding the establishment of British rule, when the hand of every ambitious zamindar was against his neighbour the Paharias were a scourge to the lowland villages. An early account says—'During that interregnum or dissolution of government all friendly intercourse was at a stand. The low country bordering on the hills was almost depopulated and travellers could not pass with safety between Bhagulpore and Lurruckabad nor could boats without danger of being plundered, put to for the night on the south side of the Ganges.

The Paharias were treated as enemies of the human race. A perpetual savage warfare was maintained by them against the inhabitants of the plains. wrote a Judge in 1608 and they were proscribed and hunted down like wild beasts. Incredible as it may appear he had been informed by a former Collector of Birlhum (to which this tract was attached) that the heads of the Paharias were brought in by basket loads. Bishop Heber similarly wrote in 1824 that a deadly

feud had been carried on between them and the cultivators of the neighbouring lowlands. " they being untamed thieves and murderers continually making forays, and the Muhammadan zamindars killing them like mad dogs or tigers whenever they got them within gunshot "

**Pacification of the Paharias.**—In order to introduce peace and order, Warren Hastings in 1722 placed the disturbed tract, which was known as the Jungleterry, *i e*, Jungle Tarai, under a military officer, Captain Brooke. He was given a force of about 800 men and his instructions were characteristic of Warren Hastings' large views. He was to subdue not only the hill robbers but also the rebellious zamindars, and order having been established, he was to induce them to become peaceful cultivators. Brooke pursued marauders into the hills, hunted them down and then conciliated them with presents and feasts. In 1774 Warren Hastings claimed that " the Jungleterry, a tract of country which was considered as inaccessible and unknown and only served as a receptacle for robbers, has been reduced to government and the inhabitants civilized " The work begun

by Brooke was carried on by Captain Browne till 1778 and completed by Augustus Cleveland between 1778 and his death in 1784

**Augustus Cleveland** —Cleveland proved the efficacy of conciliatory measures. He set himself to make friends of the Paharias founded tribunals presided over by their tribal chiefs and enrolled a corps of Paharias, called the Hills Rangers to suppress violence and enforce authority. They were thus made the agents of their own civilization. Cleveland won their confidence and affection by personal magnetism and real sympathy. He went among them unarmed, presided at feasts which he gave to hundreds at a time, established bazars for the sale of their jungle produce, distributed seeds and even started schools. Last but not least he made them realize that they were under the authority of their own chiefs. To this day the Paharias revere the memory of Chalmish Sahib as they call him.

His work is worthily commemorated by the epyth (quoted in Chapter VIII) on his tomb, at Bhaupur which was erected by Warren Hastings and his Council in honour of his

character and for an example to others” A poetical tribute to his memory was also offered by his cousin, Sir John Shore (Lord Teignmouth) in a long monody written in the style then popular, of which the lines below are typical —

Let History tell the deeds his wisdom planned,  
His bloodless triumphs o'er a barbarous land  
Bright in his hand the sword of justice gleam'd,  
But mercy from her eyes benignant beam'd—  
And mercy won the cause The savage band  
Forsook their haunts and bowed to his command,  
And now, where rapine mark'd the blood-  
stained field,  
The well-till'd glebes a smiling harvest yield,  
Now mended morals check the lust for spoil,  
And rising letters prove his generous toil.

Though only 29 years old when he died, Cleveland had made his mark Thackeray in *The Four Georges* compared him with George IV much to the disadvantage of the latter, and Bishop Heber eulogized him as one of the best of English gentlemen, the happy possessor of all sorts of gifts and accomplishments, birth, wit, fame, high character, competence

**The Khonds.**—To the humanizing efforts of a number of British officers and especially



of Major Charters Macpherson, General Sir John Campbell and Dr Cadenhead, must be ascribed the suppression of the barbarous customs of female infanticide and human sacrifice among the Khonds. The Khonds are a Dravidian race who maintained themselves in more or less wild independence in the fastnesses of the hills in the Orissa States and the north of the Madras Presidency. The British first came into contact with them in 1836-37 when the State of Gumsur in Ganjam was occupied. In this little campaign Macpherson served as a lieutenant. He set himself to study the customs of the Khonds and his researches resulted in the first detailed information of the savage practices from which he afterwards warned them.

**Female Infanticide** — The practice of killing female infants has been somewhat callously described as a matter of social convenience. It has its origin in the marriage customs of the Khonds and no clearer or more concise explanation of its cause can be given than that written by Macpherson. A wife may quit her husband at any time except within a year of her marriage or when she expects offspring, or

within a year after the birth of a child, and she may then return to her father's house or contract a new marriage, while no man who is without a wife may, without entailing disgrace on himself and his tribe, refuse to receive any woman who may choose to enter his house and establish herself as its mistress. Now, a bridegroom gives for a wife of these tribes, in which so few women are brought up, a large consideration in cattle and money. The sum is chiefly subscribed by his near relatives and his branch of the tribe, and is paid to his wife's father, who, again, distributes it amongst the heads of families of his own branch. But, when a wife quits her husband, he has a right to reclaim immediately from her father the whole sum paid for her, while the father, at the same time, becomes entitled to levy a like sum from any new husband to whom she may attach herself.

“ And, it being observed that every man's tribe is at once answerable for all his debts and bound in honour to enforce his claims, it will be understood that these restitutions and exactions, whether to be made between persons belonging to different tribes or to different branches of the same

tribe must be even in the simplest cases productive of infinite difficulty and vexation while they have given rise to three-fourths of the sanguinary quarrels and hereditary feuds which distract the Khond country. Thence say the Khonds—'To any man but a rich and powerful chief who desires to form connexions and is able to make large and sudden restitutions and to his tribe a married daughter is a curse. By the death of our female infants before they see the light the lives of men without number are saved and we live in comparative peace. So effectually did the Khonds act on this belief that villages containing a hundred houses could be seen without a single female child.

**Human sacrifices**—The custom of human sacrifice on the other hand was based on and formed part of the religion of the Khonds. The victims who were known as *Merimas* (whence the term *Meriah* sacrifice) were offered to the earth goddess (called *Tata* *Ictas* in the Khondish) a fierce and vindictive deity neglect of whose worship caused drought and destruction of crops or brought disease and other misfortunes

By immemorial custom the Meriahs had to be bought with a price or to be the offspring of parents so bought. They were purchased from a degraded race of helots, called Pans, who worked as serfs under the Khonds, they were either kidnapped or bought by the Pans in time of scarcity or were the Pans' own children. They were allowed to grow up and marry, but the children were doomed to the same fate as their parents.

Some of the sacrifices were occasional and individual, *i e*, they were offered by a family, to avert some apprehended misfortune, the Pans kept a stock of Meriahs in reserve for such emergencies. The principal sacrifices were periodical and communal, *i e*, they were offered at the time of sowing and attended by delegates from different villages or communes. The flesh of the victim had the magical quality, when buried in the fields, of ensuring fertility, and the sacrifices were so arranged that each head of a family could get a shred of flesh for this purpose at least once a year.

The manner of sacrifice varied, but it was always preceded by a debauch and was revolting in its atrocity. The commonest form was to tie the victim to a stake. The priest

struck the first blow and the assembled Khonds then rushed in, cut away the flesh of the living victim, and hurried off with their portions to bury them in the fields. Fortunately for him (or her) the victim was previously stupefied with drink or drugs not apparently from any motive of mercy, but to prevent resistance. Sometimes he was first smothered in a pit filled with the blood of a newly killed pig; at other times he was dragged across the fields followed by a crowd of Khonds maddened with drink and excitement hacking at his body and limbs.

**Major Macpherson's work**—From 1842 to 1844 Macpherson worked with signal success in civilizing the Khonds in the Madras Presidency. His operations were extended to the hill tracts of Orissa in 1845 when he was appointed under the terms of a special Act Agent for the suppression of human sacrifice and infanticide and was given a staff of officers. He found the Khonds of Baud ready to follow the example of their brethren in Gumsur for they had seen that he was for them was no necessary as a fertilizer and that the land yielded abundant crops without it. They resolved to give up

human sacrifices, but first immolated 120 victims as a final grand offering to the earth goddess. When Macpherson appeared among them, they made over to him 170 Meriahs who were left over. His work however came to a sudden stop, the Khonds having been incited to rise by rumours that the British intended to tax them and reduce them to a servile state. The return of the victims was demanded on the ground that their previous delivery was a confession of surrender of independence. Macpherson, unable to contend against the Khond tribes, was obliged to retire after handing the Meriahs over to the Raja of Baud under a solemn pledge that they would be kept safely and again restored to British protection.

The methods of Macpherson followed the same lines as those of Cleveland in the Rajmahal Hills. He mixed freely with the Khonds, gave them presents, fostered trade and friendly relations with their neighbours by means of fairs, and convinced them that it was their own good that he sought. He used the weapon of persuasion and not of force, pointing, for instance, to the ancient sacrifices of the Druids and arguing that since their abandonment the British had become

lords of the earth. Above all, he owed his success to the way in which he supported and associated himself with the chiefs in the administration of justice. He himself presided over the primitive courts in patriarchal fashion; he settled inter-tribal quarrels and prevented or decided disputes over marriage contracts which had been a fruitful cause of female infanticide.

**The work of Campbell** — The Khond rebellion of 1847 was soon quelled by military force and the work of rescuing Meriahs was carried on by Sir John Campbell who succeeded Macpherson as Agent. 'Districts' he reported unheard of and unvisited by any European were traversed over, and more gloomy pestilential regions were rarely seen. With one or two exceptions every influential man in Brud has completely submitted to the will of the Government, pledged themselves by swearing in their most solemn manner on a tiger skin and some earth henceforth to abstain from the performance of the Meriah and in token of their submission and obedience delivered the victim. In 1849 he was able to report the entire abolition of the rite of human sacrifice, no drop of blood being shed

and the people showing no disposition to break the pledges which they had given

The names of Campbell and Macpherson are still held in affectionate remembrance by the Khonds under the mutilated forms of Kaibon Saheb and Mokodella Saheb, and one of their songs relates how they brought forth the people from darkness to light. Murder and bloodshed, it says, were quelled, the land became beautiful, and wisdom was taught to the people

### **Subsequent progress of the Khondmals.—**

The tract known as the Khondmals was taken over in 1885 from Baud, to which it nominally belonged, in consequence of another outbreak, and during the Mutiny of 1857 advantage was taken of the warlike qualities of the Khonds to raise a corps, which did good service in the Central Provinces. They have since become so peaceful, that in 1891 the Khondmals was converted into a subdivision of the Angul district. The change of spirit among these savage people may be illustrated by the spontaneous growth of a prohibition movement in recent years. In 1908 they made a vow of total abstinence from intoxicating liquor. Finding that their good resolu-



tions were not proof against the temptation of drink they petitioned Government in 1910 to close every liquor shop in their country—a request which was granted. Nothing else, they declared would save them from drunkenness which had proved their curse, leading to poverty wife beating and worst of all, the loss of their cherished lands.

**Other Khond outbreaks** —There have been some sporadic outbreaks of the Khonds in other parts of Orissa. There was a rebellion against the Raja of Baud in 1862 and in 1881-82 the Khonds in the State of Kalahandi rose because they were being ousted from their lands by Hindu cultivators introduced by the Raja. The outbreak was not suppressed till after they had murdered a number of their Hindu rivals whose scalps they hung on their bows. In 1894 again they revolted against the Chief of Navagarh this rebellion being also attended by many murders and outrages.

Lastly there was a rising of the Khonds of Dupalla in 1914 which was inspired by a relative of the late Chief whose claims to succession had been rejected in favour of the Chief adopted son. About 1500 Khonds

took an active part in the rising and beset the Rajbari or palace, in which the Political Agent, who had hurried to the spot, had to take refuge. The siege was raised by the Commissioner of Orissa, with a small body of 50 armed police, just as the Rajbari had been set on fire and was about to be rushed by the rebels. After this, the latter were rounded up by a detachment of regular troops from Calcutta and Gurkha military police from Ranchi.

**The Jungle Mahals.**—When British rule began, the officers of Government found on the south-west frontier of Bengal, in Manbhum and parts of the districts of Midnapore, Bankura and Singhbhum, a number of turbulent semi-independent tribes, such as the Bhumij. To these the Bengali name of Chuar or savage was generically given, and their country was known as the Jungle Mahals. “The zamindars,” wrote the Collector of Midnapore in 1778, “are mere freebooters, who plunder their neighbours and one another, and their tenants are a banditti whom they chiefly employ in their outrages. As soon as the harvest is gathered in, they carry their grain to the tops of the hills or lodge it in other fastnesses that are impregnable, so that whenever

they are pursued by a superior force, they retire to these places, where they are quite secure and bid defiance to any attack that may be made on them. After the harvest is gathered in, there is scarcely one of them who does not call his vots to his standard, either to defend his own property or to attack his neighbours.

In order to keep these marauders in check a number of punitive expeditions were necessary. It was an inglorious jungle warfare. One officer wrote in 1768 "It is all a joke to talk of licking these jungle fellows. They have not the least idea of fighting they are like a parcel of wasps, they endeavour to sting you with their arrows and then fly off."

I wish to God this business was over. Another officer six years later found the jungle tribes better fighters.

These people being as brave as our sepoys their numbers must prevail when they cannot be kept at a distance their arrows being as superior to bayonets as muskets are to arrows. Eventually this frontier tract was pacified and in 1803 was formed into a separate district (the Jungle Mahals district) and Mr Major-General having his headquarters at Bankura.

**Bhumij rising of 1832.**—In 1832 the restless Bhumij rose in revolt under one Ganga Narayan, who had been dispossessed of the Barabhum estate in Manbhum. For a time they had the country at their mercy. The British officials fled to Burdwan, and the insurgents sacked every place worth plundering. As soon as a military force could take the field, they were driven back into the hills and Ganga Narayan fled to Singhbhum, where he tried to raise the warlike Hos. They demanded that he should give a proof of his mettle by an attack on the Chief of Kharsawan. In this he was killed and the Chief had the pleasure of sending his head to the British commander. As a result of this rising and of the Kol rebellion described later, a change of administration was carried out. The district of the Jungle Mahals was abolished and replaced by the district of Manbhum, which included the present district of that name and also the west of Bankura and Dhalbhum (now a part of Singhbhum district). The new district was placed, with the rest of Chota Nagpur, under an officer styled the Agent for the South-West Frontier.

**War with the Hos, 1820-21** —The British had first come into contact with the Hos in

1820 They were a far more formidable race than any of the aboriginals hitherto encountered as indeed may be gathered from the name they went by viz the Larka Kols or warrior Kols the term Kol is a generic name for the tribes of Chota Nagpur whether Hos Mundas or Oraons Their stronghold was the Kolhan a tract of about 2 000 square miles largely covered with forest where they not only maintained their independence but made themselves a terror to their neighbours by their raids Attempts by neighbouring Rajas to subdue them had ended in the disastrous rout of the invaders and bloody reprisals

The Raja of Porahat on becoming feudatory to the British in 1820 induced the Political Agent Major Roughsedge to march against the Hos of whom he claimed to be the overlord making out that they were his rebellious subjects Roughsedge agreed but such was the fear in which the Raja and other chiefs held the power and ferocity of the Hos that as soon as he had done so they looked a protest against the danger of invading the Kolhan Roughsedge endeavoured to corral the Hos and thought he had done so for at first they offered no opposition

So unsophisticated were they, that the members of the first deputation that met him, thinking his tent a good place for a siesta, coolly stretched themselves out in it and went to sleep. When, however, he got near to Chaibasa, the Hos attacked the British force with desperate but unavailing valour charging across the open plain, battle-axe in hand, only to be mown down by the fire of the troops or sabred by the cavalry in hand-to-hand fighting. They also lost heavily in other engagements, but the year ended without Roughsedge being able to overcome the Hos of the south. The campaign was renewed in 1821, when a large force was employed, and the Hos gave in after a short struggle.

**Subjugation of the Hos.**—The chiefs of the Hos begged hard to be brought under the direct rule of the British, but this flattering request was rejected and they were forced to enter into agreements under which they were to be subject to the Raja of Porahat and pay him a plough tax. After the British force withdrew, they soon became restive and it was fifteen years before they were reduced. The Raja was powerless to hold them in check, and they resumed their old predatory life.

carrying their ravages far into the neighbouring States. They joined in the Kol rebellion of 1831 (described below), constituting the most formidable part of the rebel army.

After the rebellion had been suppressed the Agent for the South West Frontier Sir Thomas Wilkinson urged the futility of leaving them under the nominal rule of the Raja of Porahat and the necessity of bringing the Kolhan under the control of British officers. The annexation of the Kolhan was decided on and in 1836 a strong force was sent to occupy it. It met with little opposition, the chiefs being ready to swear allegiance to the British and glad to be free from any pretence of subjection to the Raja of Porahat. Simple rules for the administration of the country were drawn up, a British officer was stationed at Chaibasa with patriarchal powers, and the land which had been the scene of constant bloodshed and rapine, and peace, all the bands of authority were fixed during the Mutiny of 1857.

**The Kol Rebellion, 1831** —There had long been a smouldering discontent among the Mundas and Oraons in what is now the Ranchi dis-

strict owing to the disregard of their ancestral rights by landlords who, anxious to increase their incomes, granted away their lands to aliens, Hindus, Muhammadans and also Sikhs. In 1831 they rose *en masse*. They were joined by the Hos of Singhbhum, and the rebellion spread into Manbhum, Hazaribagh and even Palamau, where the Cheros and Kharwars were smarting under the oppression of the landlords and their agents. The fury of the insurgents was directed against the Hindus and Muhammadans, who had either supplanted them or been the instruments of their oppression. Throughout Chota Nagpur they carried fire and slaughter from village to village, butchering every Indian alien on whom they could lay hands, burning their property and laying waste their fields, nearly one thousand unfortunate immigrants perished. The rebellion was not suppressed without some hard fighting, three columns of troops with cavalry had to be employed before tranquillity was restored.

It was apparent that there had been inadequate control over Chota Nagpur, the greater part of which formed a huge amorphous district, known as Ramgarh from the place of that name in the Hazaribagh district, where



the Magistrate had his headquarters. The whole of Chota Nagpur was now formed into a frontier province called the Agency for the South West Frontier under a Political Officer styled the Agent with Assistants in each district. This arrangement lasted till 1854, when it was constituted the division of Chota Nagpur under a Commissioner the Assistants being converted into Deputy Commissioners.

**The Santal Rebellion, 1885** —A year later there was a rebellion in the Santal Parganas which resembled the Kol rebellion both in the causes producing it and in the course which it took. The Santals migrated to the Santal Parganas from the Chota Nagpur plateau and the adjoining parts of Midnapore and Singhbhum during the last part of the eighteenth and the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In the tract known as the Daman Koh they found a country congenial to their nature, game to be killed, virgin land to be cleared, under the paternal jurisdiction of a British officer. The country it was said was alive with the activity of a quiet and prosperous people. This very prosperity was the undoing of the unsophisticated Santals. It

attracted Hindu and Muhammadan immigrants from Bengal and Bihar, who set themselves up as traders and money-lenders. The Santals, thriftless and improvident, were as children in their hands. Their own accounts consisted of strings with knots to represent the number of rupees taken as loans. The usurers had ledgers and bonds carefully prepared and, if necessary, fabricated, so that their debtors were hopeless in any suit. The rate of interest was exorbitant, and the inevitable consequence was loss of cattle, of land and often of freedom, it being a common device of the money-lender to stipulate that his debtor should work for him without pay till the debt was discharged. The obligation of service might descend to sons or even grandsons, and cultivators degenerated into serfs.

The rack-renting of landlords added to the Santals' sense of wrong and grievance. They originally had land settled with them on long leases and on easy terms, in order that they might reclaim jungle. The land having been cleared, Bengali and Bihari speculators, to whom many of the estates passed, screwed up the rents, evicted the Santals and installed strangers in their places. When the Santals

moved on and cleared fresh jungle, the same process was repeated for they were supplanted by new-comers introduced by the landlord or by money lenders to whom they had given mortgages in return for loans. Added to this the police corrupt and oppressive were in league with the landlords and usurers and made exactions on their own account from the Santals. The courts (at Bhagalpur and Monghyr) were remote and in any case the simple Santal was ignorant and apprehensive of the processes of the law which he had only seen in operation against him.

The condition to which the Santals were reduced ran counter to their traditional belief that the man who reclaimed jungle had a sole right to its fruits. Their golden age was one in which the Santals lived in peace each man on his own holding paying no rent and untroubled by the presence of aliens. Smarting under their grievances they resolved to rise clear out the hated Bengalis and other alien oppressors and so have the country to themselves. It was given out as a divine command that they were to kill all money lenders and policemen expel traders and landlords and fight to the death all who resisted them.

They themselves declared that they warred only against the Bengalis and not against the Government, and their atrocities were mainly committed on Bengalis—slow roasting of men, ripping up of women, torture of children and drinking the blood of their victims. Their fiendish outrages were characterized by a certain savage humour. The body of a landlord was chopped into 22 pieces, one for each of his ancestors. When a money-lender was taken, they first cut off his feet shouting that four annas in the rupee had been paid, then hacked off his legs to make up eight annas, cut his body in two to represent twelve annas, and ended by beheading him, yelling in chorus that he had full payment of sixteen annas.

The rising, which broke out at the end of June 1855, took the Government by surprise. The Santals overran the country from Colgong on the west to Rajmahal on the east and nearly as far south as Ranigunj and Sainthia. All the troops available were mobilized, and by the end of August the insurgents had been driven out of the north of the district. There were still, however, 30,000 men in arms, and it was not till after the close of the year

that they were finally reduced by a cordon of troops sweeping through the country. The struggle was prolonged by the desperate bravery of the Santals who never knew when they were beaten fought long after resistance was hopeless and refused to surrender.

A characteristic incident was that of a party of 45 men who held out in a house and refused to lay down their arms. As each volley was fired by the sepoys they were offered quarter the reply each time was a discharge of arrows. This continued till only one old Santal was left. He was called on to surrender by a sepoy whereupon he rushed on the sepoy and cut him down with his battle axe.

It was not war said one British officer they did not understand yielding. As long as their national drums beat the whole party would stand and allow themselves to be shot down. Their arrows often killed our men and so we had to fire on them as long as they stood. When their drums ceased they would move off for a quarter of a mile then their drums began again and they calmly stood till we came up and poured a few volleys into them. There was not a sepoy in the war who did not feel a hand of him. If

**Remedial measures.**—Surprising as it may sound, the rebellion did good, for it brought home to the Government the fact that the Santals had genuine grievances which must be redressed. In 1855 a separate district was formed of the Santal Parganas, a simple form of administration was introduced, of which the main feature was the direct contact of the people with the officers of Government without intermediaries, the police were abolished and the policing of their villages was left to the Santals themselves.

Laws which were in force in Bengal were, however, allowed to operate despite conditions which rendered them a source of danger. After a time they began to reproduce some of the evils which had provoked the rising of 1855, *e g*, the landlords were able under the Rent Act of 1859 to enhance rents and eject village headmen, while money-lenders under the Civil Procedure Code of the same year obtained decrees for usurious rates of interest. The Santals became restive and in 1871 assembled in tumultuous gatherings with the avowed object of obtaining redress for grievances. The necessity for the prompt enactment of protective legislation was recognized,

and the unrest was allayed by a special Regulation passed in 1872 by which exorbitant rates of interest were barred, a record of landlords and tenants' rights was sanctioned and Government was authorized to exclude from the Santal Parganas laws unsuited to its special conditions. The settlement which followed resulted in security of tenure, fixing of rents and the preservation of the village communal system cherished by the Santals. Subsequent legislation (in 1886 1904 1907 and 1908) has supplemented this regulation and served to fulfil its object viz the peace and good government of the Santal Parganas and the Santals have prospered under the administration of a succession of able and sympathetic officers.

**The Kherwar movement** — From time to time trouble has been threatened by the liability of the Santals to be swept away by mass movements partly religious and partly agrarian notably the Kherwar movement which combines a puritanical propaganda with a militant campaign. Kherwar according to the Santals was their original name and the aim of the movement is a return to the golden age when they worshipped only one

God and were lords of the soil It first came into prominence in 1871, when a Santal named Bhagrit appeared as an apostle exhorting the Santals to abstain from intoxicating liquor, and also from eating pork and fowls, and to worship the true God only The burden of his teaching, however, was that the land belonged to the Santals and that they should pay no rent for it His followers were to rise at a given signal and drive all aliens out With his arrest, conviction and imprisonment, the movement collapsed for the time, but it has revived more than once with the appearance of preachers credited with super-human powers, especially in times of scarcity, when the Santals attribute their misfortunes to their fall from a state of pristine purity when they worshipped only one God The movement threatened to be dangerous in 1880-81, when the people were excited and alarmed by the census, which was represented to be the prelude to sinister measures by Government So serious was the situation, that the usual enumeration at night had to be given up, and an army of 4,500 men was ordered up and columns marched through the district to overawe the turbulent Santals



**Agrarian unrest in Chota Nagpur** —Agrarian trouble more or less acute, also persisted in Chota Nagpur after the Kol rebellion of 1831. The special rights which the aborigines enjoyed had been recognized by the indigenous landlords but in course of time many estates passed to aliens chiefly of the money lender class who enhanced their tenants rents and encroached on those rights. Constant disputes and friction resulted. The first remedial measure was the Chota Nagpur Tenures Act of 1860 which authorized the demarcation mapping and registration of the greater part of the tenures and this was followed by a Landlord and Tenant Act ten years later. These measures failed to allay unrest. Trouble was caused by the landlords exacting cesses irregular in amount and uncertain in incidence and also pre-dial services i.e., the tenants were liable to furnish unpaid labour in ploughing, digging, sowing and carrying their landlords baggage on journeys. A remedy was found in the Commutation Act of 1897 which provided for the record and commutation to cash payment of these services.

In spite of these measures the aborigines failed to get effective protection from oppression of the landlords. In the courts they

were no match for the astute Hindus and Muhammadans, who were moreover possessed of far greater resources. They were filled with resentment against the Government, whose failure to interfere they could not understand. Their smouldering discontent was fanned by the agitation of self-interested leaders (*sardars*), and they went so far as to put forward claims extending to absolute proprietorship of the land, subject to the payment of Government revenue, on the ground that it had been cleared from waste by their forefathers.

**The Birsait outbreak, 1899-1900.**—This agitation, which was known as the Sardari Larai, literally the leaders' war, was given a new impulse and driving force by religious fanaticism. A semi-religious, semi-political movement, like the Kherwar movement, sprung up owing to the propaganda of one Birsā, a Munda who had been a Christian convert and had apostacized. His teaching was partly spiritual and partly revolutionary, a strange medley of admonitions to purity and asceticism and of injunctions to defy Government and its officers. Many of his ideas were derived from the Christian teaching he had

received but his cult was anti Christian, his object being to found a new sect which would counteract the spread of Christianity by the missionaries who were making great progress in Chota Nagpur

Busa first appeared as a divinely inspired teacher in 1895 claiming to be an incarnation of the deity who would save his followers all others being doomed to destruction His supernatural powers were believed in and his doctrines spread like wild fire among the Mundas and Oraons while many Christian converts became his disciples They must, he declared worship one God only and abjure the worship of devils This proved popular for the Mundas said it was an economical religion saving the expense of sacrifices One day a week must be observed as a day of rest his followers must lead pure lives murder, stealing and lying were deadly sins White pigs and white fowls were unclean and should be destroyed All who held aloof were doomed to destruction in a great flood, which would overwhelm the world Such was the belief he inculcated that the credulous Mundas carried out his orders for the destruction of pigs and

fowls, and, in anticipation of the deluge, stopped cultivation and turned thousands of their cattle loose into the jungle

At the same time he proclaimed that the land belonged to the people who had cleared it from jungle and that no rent should be paid for it. They should rise, expel all foreigners and rule themselves. The guns of their adversaries would be turned to wood and their bullets to water. In consequence of these incendiary doctrines, he was arrested, tried and sentenced to imprisonment. No Munda, however, believed that he was actually incarcerated, they were convinced that he had gone to heaven and would reappear. He did reappear in 1897, being released, with other prisoners, on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. He promptly recommenced his propaganda, urging the Mundas and Oraons to assert their ancient rights over the land and the jungle. The motive idea was that they would be able by revolt to upset the authority of Government and by instituting a reign of terror compel submission to their demands. An outbreak finally occurred on Christmas Eve, 1899. Villages were burnt down and attacks made on Christian mission stations. Outrages, mainly

against Christians were committed over a large area in Ranchi and part of Singhbhum but the rising was easily suppressed in a month by the local authorities with the help of troops stationed at Ranchi. Birsa himself was captured and died of cholera while under trial.

After this measures were taken partly legislative and partly executive to safeguard the aboriginals' customary rights from the aggression of landlords' tenancy legislation being enacted in 1903 and again in 1908, to which practical force was given by a settlement and record of rights.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### Religious Movements.

**Raja Ram Mohan Rai.**—In the early part of the nineteenth century two reforming movements sprung up among the Hindus and Muhammadans. Among the Hindus the apostle of reform was Raja Ram Mohan Rai, who holding that Hinduism was originally pure deism, sought to free it from the accretions of superstition by which it had been overlaid. Born in 1774, a Brahman by caste, he wrote at the age of 16 a treatise, intended only for private circulation, attacking the superstitious practices of the Hindus. This early effort was followed by years of travelling, after which he spent 13 years (1800-13) in the service of Government, rising to the position of head ministerial officer in a district.

Retiring in 1814 he devoted the rest of his life to the cause of reform, religious and social. He has been described as being virtually the founder of the modern social reform movement in India. An ardent educationalist, he advocated the introduction of

English education and had a large part in the establishment of the first English college in Bengal the Hindu college He denounced the evils of polygamy and was a protagonist against the practice of suttee (*sati*) It was largely in consequence of his campaign that suttee was abolished in 1829 A master of languages the books which came from his facile pen have made his one of the great names in Bengali literature

In 1830 he went to England as an agent for the King of Delhi who bestowed on him the title of Raja the object of his mission was to obtain an increase of the grant for the King's maintenance He died three years later at Bristol where the epitaph on his tomb records His unwearying labours to promote the social moral and physical condition of the people of India his earnest endeavours to suppress idolatry and the zealous advocacy of whatever tended to advance the glory of God and the welfare of man live in the grateful remembrance of his countrymen To this may be added the excellent summary given by Mr C. I. Andrews in *The Renaissance in India* The greatness of Raja Ram Mohan Baidyanath can only be rightly estimated when we remember what India was more than a hundred

years ago He was the first Indian under the British rule to break through the trammels of convention and to dare to think for himself and educate himself on modern lines This did not lead, however, in his case to contempt for ancient India On the contrary, he loved his country more deeply than ever and strove during his whole life to bring to his countrymen the enlightenment which he had himself received The abolition of *sati* and the founding of the Brahmo Samaj were not his sole achievements, for he shares with Carey the honour of having created the vernacular press in Bengal and with Alexander Duff that of having established the first English schools in Calcutta He was also the first Hindu to make the sea voyage to England But even more important than these signal changes, great as they were, was the new reforming spirit, the new outlook upon Christianity and western civilization, which Ram Mohan Rai introduced to his own fellow countrymen in India This spirit, which connoted a new moral fervour and a new intellectual freedom, has been the main cause ever since of the liberalizing and humanizing of Indian thought and life ”



### Foundation of the Brahmo Samaj, 1828 —

Ram Mohan Rai first founded in 1814 a body called the *Atmiya Sabha* the object of which was stated to be the worship of the one invisible God inculcated in the Upanishads. Other enlightened Hindus gathered round him and in 1828 he founded the Brahmo Samaj a monotheistic body the tenets of which were briefly 'to teach and to practise the worship of the one supreme undivided eternal God.' Its secession from Hinduism was marked by the rejection of Brahman priests and the abjuring of idolatry. No sacrifices offerings or oblations were permitted images statues and even pictures were excluded from the place of worship. The doctrines of the Samaj have a resemblance to English Unitarianism but its theology was derived from the Upanishads the real spirit of the Hindu scriptures according to Ram Mohan Rai being but the declaration of the unity of God. The moral principles of the Samaj were based on Christianity. Ram Mohan Rai's admiration for which is expressed in the title of one of his books *The Precepts of Jesus the Guide to Happiness and Peace*. Opposition came from the orthodox who founded a body

called the Dharma Sabha, for the defence of conservative Hinduism

### **Subsequent history of the Brahmo Samaj —**

The next great leader of the Samaj was Debendra Nath Tagore (1818-1905), whose name is generally prefixed by the designation of Maharshi or great sage—a tribute to his saintliness and the veneration in which he was held. The influence of the Samaj was extended by a monthly journal, the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*, which he started in 1843 and which became a power in the land under the editorship of the poet Aksh'ay Kumar Datta.

In 1886 a schism was caused by the secession of a number of members under Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-84), who desired a more active and progressive attitude to be taken up in the matter of social reform. Keshab Chandra Sen founded a new body called the Nabibidhan Samaj or Church of the New Dispensation, which was of a more eclectic character than the parent body, for it adopted extracts from the Bible, the Koran and the Zendavesta, as well as from the Hindu Sas-tras, for the spiritual guidance of its members. The parent body was distinguished from it by the name of Adi (or

original) Brahmo Samaj and also by its doctrines for it laid greater stress on the renunciation of idolatry than on social reform and it upheld the system of caste unless it came into conflict with religious belief.

Another schism occurred in 1878 in consequence of the dissatisfaction caused by the marriage of the daughter of Keshab Chandra Sen to the Maharaja of Cooch Behar. Keshab Chandra had been instrumental in securing the enactment of the Brahmo Marriages Act, of 1872 which legalized the marriages of Brahmos and provided that the minimum age for a bride should be 14 years. Keshab Chandra's daughter was only 13 years of age and the performance of Hindu rites in connection with the marriage was another ground of offence. The result of the schism was the formation of another body the Sadharan (i.e. catholic or common) Brahmo Samaj which repudiates caste distinctions and holds advanced views on social questions such as the joint family system and the position of women.

After the death of Keshab Chandra Sen in 1884 the Brahmo Samaj ceased to make much progress and the number of its adherents now amounts only to a few thousands. The actual number of followers of the Brahmo

Samaj was in any case never very great. Its religious creed appealed to the intellect of the educated minority and not to the emotions of the masses, and it has lacked cohesion and driving power. Owing however to the men of light and leading who have been its pillars, it has had an influence out of all proportion to its numbers, an influence which has been felt in Bengali literature and culture, in educational and philanthropic work and, generally, in what has already been referred to as the liberalizing and humanizing of Indian life and thought, especially as regards the position and education of women.

**The Wahabi movement.**—At about the same time that the Brahmo Samaj came into being, a great reforming movement was in progress among the Muhammadans—the Wahabi movement, so-called after its founder, Abdul Wahab, an Arabian who died in 1787. The creed which he proclaimed was puritanical in the sense that its object was to restore the early faith of Islam, which, he declared, had been debased by superstitious innovations, such as the cult of saints. The authority of the founders of the four orthodox schools was rejected, an appeal being

made to the Koran itself and *jihad*, or war against unbelievers was inculcated as a solemn duty. The doctrines of the new cult were brought back to India by pilgrims returning from Mecca. Its chief apostle was Sayid Ahmad Shah of Rai Bareilly who became a Wahabi while at Mecca in 1822 and proclaimed himself an Imam. It is a Muhammadan belief that in each century God raises up an Iman as his messenger to reform the faith. At Patna Sayid Ahmad founded a number of ardent followers from among whom he selected three caliphs or lieutenants, Shah Muhammad Hussain and two brothers Inayat Ali and Wilayat Ali, of whom the last was engaged in spreading the movement in Bengal, Patna being its headquarters. In 1826 Sayid Ahmad announced that the time had come for a *jihad* or holy war against the Sikhs who had oppressed the Muhammadans in the Punjab and interfered with the practice of their religion. A fanatical war followed in which the Wahabites supplied with recruits and money from Bihar and Bengal as well as from the frontier overran the Sikh border and in 1831 captured Peshawar (1830).

**Titu Miyan's rising, 1831-32.**—The success of the Wahabis in the north emboldened their brethren in Bengal to rise under a leader in the 24-Parganas, named Titu Miyan. For a time the districts of Nadia, Faridpur and the 24-Parganas were infested by bands of fanatical Wahabis, three and four thousand strong, which from November 1831 to March, 1832, committed outrages similar to those which characterized the recent Moplah rebellion in southern India. Temples were defiled, Hindus forcibly converted and orthodox Muhammadans maltreated, while proclamations were issued announcing the end of British rule and the re-establishment of Muhammadan power. The headquarters of the rebels was at Narikelbaria, a village in the 24-Parganas, which they fortified with a stockade. When at last a strong force was sent against them, they disdained the protection of the stockade and met the troops in a pitched battle in the open plain. Titu Miyan was killed, 350 of his followers were taken prisoners, and the rising collapsed.

**Frontier wars.**—In 1831 Saiyid Ahmad was killed in a battle against the Sikhs, but the holy war was kept up by a fiction that he

was not dead but had disappeared from mortal sight and would reappear to destroy all infidels. Two of the caliphs at Patna, Wilayat Ali and Inayat Ali, now became leaders of the Wahabis who occupied a wide stretch of territory along the Indus and established a colony at Sitana of which Inayat Ali was for some time in command. With the annexation of the Punjab the British Government inherited the border warfare waged by the bigoted Wahabis to whom arms, supplies and recruits were sent from Patna where the leader was one Ahmad Ulla.

During the Mutiny it was apprehended that the Wahabis might seize the opportunity to strike a blow at British rule but their power for mischief was paralyzed by the prompt action of the Commissioner Mr. Taylor in arresting the leaders of the sect (some of whom were hanged) and disarming the citizens of Patna. Ahmad Ulla was subsequently released. The Wahabis again became active along the frontier in 1858 but a punitive expedition ended in the destruction of Sitana and the expulsion of the fanatics from their villages.

**The Wahabi trials.**—Another outbreak followed in 1863 and developed into a coalition of frontier tribes, which was only suppressed after an arduous campaign. Inquiries which were now set on foot brought to light the existence of a wide-spread conspiracy. Eleven of the ring-leaders, including five men from Patna, were tried and convicted at Umballa, and next year (1865) the prime mover in the conspiracy, Ahmad Ulla, was sentenced to transportation for life. So little were the authorities aware of the real character of the Wahabis after 1857, that Mr Tayler's successor described them as "innocent and inoffensive bookmen," and Ahmad Ulla himself obtained a responsible post in Government service. Incidentally, the trials proved of practical value to Patna, for the proceeds of the confiscated property of the convicted Wahabis was used for the improvement of the city.

The removal of Ahmad Ulla did not put a stop to the machinations of the Wahabis, for a few years later it was found that preparations were again being made for a *jihad*. Further trials were instituted in 1868 against ring-leaders at Patna, Malda and Rajmahal, the result of which was to put an end to the



propaganda and make the name of Wahabi one of reproach among the Muhammadans. According to Sir Herbert Edwardes who was Commissioner at Umballa in 1864 the trials at that place and at Patna 'disclosed or rather brought to judicial proof in courts of law what had only been imperfectly known previously and most unaccountably pooh poohed by the Bengal Government, viz, that for years the Wahabi followers of Saiyad Ahmad had spread a net work of propaganda over the Bengal province first to restore the purity of Islam in India second as a logical consequence to undermine and subvert the infidel power of the English. The centre of this truly bitter and formidable conspiracy was Patna. The Magistrate of Patna also wrote that the Wahabis had "under the very nose and protection of Government authorities openly preached sedition in every village of our most populous districts unsettling the minds of the Musalman population and obtaining an influence for evil as extraordinary as it is certain."

**Effect of the movement** — Apart from its political aspect the Wahabi movement was an important factor in increasing the strength and

vitality of Islam in Bengal. "At century ago," wrote Sir William Hunter in his essay *England's Work in India*, "Muhammadanism seemed to be dying of inanition in Bengal. In the mosques, or amid the serene palace life of the Musalman nobility, a few *maulavis* of piety and learning calmly carried on the routine of their faith. But the Musalman peasantry of Bengal had relapsed into a mongrel breed of circumcised Hindus, not one of whom could repeat the *kalma*—a simple creed, whose constant repetition is a matter of unconscious habit with all good Muhammadans. Under our rule fervid Muhammadan missionaries have wandered from district to district, commanding the people to return to the true faith and denouncing God's wrath on the indifferent. A great body of the Bengali Muhammadans have purged themselves of rural superstitions and evinced such an ardour of revivalist zeal as occasionally to cause some little inconvenience to the Government. The doctrine that India is *dar-ul-harb*, i.e., the land of warfare in which warfare against the rulers is a religious duty, has been abandoned, but the religious stimulus of the movement is not spent. Its reforming spirit is still alive in

the puritanical sects known in Bihar as Ahl i Hadis and in Bengal as Farazis

**The Farazis** —The name Farazi is given compendiously to different sects established in Bengal in the first half of the nineteenth century by reformers who derived their inspiration from the Wahabi creed. The chief of these were Karamat Ali of Jaunpur, Haji Shariat Ullah who was the son of a weaver of Faridpur and Dudhu Miyan the son of the latter who gave an agrarian character to his propaganda by the strong stand which he made against the levy of illegal cesses by landlords. There are differences between the sects but they have a common platform in their opposition to superstitious practices often of Hindu origin for which there is no sanction in the Koran. The name is due to their claim that they observe the *faraz* or divine ordinances of God without the glosses of scholiasts and they are non-conformists in so far as they do not follow the regular schools of doctrine of the orthodox Muhammadan world. Some of them have curious views apart from religion. There is a general objection to vaccination while the Farazis arguing that the earth is the gift of God for whose service man was

created, hold that true believers should not be in the personal service of others but live by agriculture alone .

**The new Vedanta.**—A recent development of Hinduism is the new Vedantist movement, which owes its inspiration to a Bengali Brahman named Ram Krishna Parahansa (1834-86), who was deeply imbued with the spirit of Vedanta philosophy and impressed on his followers the virtues of its practical and devotional side. It was left to one of his disciples Swami Vivekananda, a Bengali Kayasth by caste, to organize his followers and give his ideas practical force by founding (in 1897) a body known as the Ram Krishna Mission to propagate the principles pronounced by Ram Krishna. The key-note of Vivekananda's teaching was that the identity of the soul with the Supreme Being can be attained not only by passive contemplation but by active, selfless service. The Mission is consequently distinguished by the prominence which it gives to social service, such as the relief of sickness and distress and by its liberal views as to foreign travel, traditional restrictions as to food, etc.

The secret of Vivekananda's influence lay in the impression which he made on the

patriotic spirit of the younger generation of Bengali Hindus—an impression which was heightened by the speeches which he made as a representative of Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago and at public meetings in America and England between 1893 and 1897. He stood out as the champion of the spirituality of India against the materialism of the West, and he was acclaimed as the mouthpiece of Indian national inspirations. We must ' he proclaimed "conquer the world through our spirituality and philosophy. The only condition of Indian national life of unashamed and vigorous national life is the conquest of the world by Indian thought."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### Agrarian Measures.

**The position after the Permanent Settlement**—As has been explained in Chapter IX, the Permanent Settlement was a one-sided measure. The status of the landlord was defined, but nothing was done to define and record the rights of the tenants as against the landlords. It was, indeed, intended that the Permanent Settlement should be followed by measures to safeguard the interests of the cultivators. Regulation I of 1793 specifically declared that "it being the duty of the ruling power to protect all classes of people and more particularly those who from their situation are most helpless," the Governor-General reserved to himself power to "enact such regulations as he may think necessary for the protection and welfare of the dependant *talukdars*", *i e*, tenure holders, "ryots and other cultivators of the soil". For nearly seventy years, nothing was done to carry out this implicit pledge. Lord Cornwallis' Government, it is true, in order to give the ryots some security of tenure and ensure some permanence in the rates of rent, ordered

that zamindars should give their tenants written leases and that *patwaris* or village accountants should maintain the ryots' accounts but these orders remained practically a dead letter

So far from the tenants interests being protected they lost their customary rights These had no statutory basis like the landlords' rights and the whole trend of legislation was to place tenants more at the mercy of their landlords Regulations were passed in 1799 and 1812 by which their property was liable to distraint and their persons to imprisonment if their rents were in arrears The landlords abused the power of distraint the tenants had no means of protecting themselves against encroachments on their rights With the growth of population and consequent competition for land rack rents became common This was especially the case in Bihar where the position was summarized (in 1893) by Sir A P (afterwards Lord) MacDonnell then officiating Lieutenant Governor The ryots he said were entitled to have a record of their rights in their holdings prepared at the landlords' expense, and it was at once the duty and intention of Government to have such a record made The

non-fulfilment of that duty and intention had entailed suffering on them. The rentals in Bihar had increased within three generations to a surprising extent, out of all proportion to what was contemplated at the time of the Permanent Settlement or to what was justifiable by any subsequent legislation—they had actually increased eighty-fold. The increases, with the consequent destruction of their rights, had reduced the ryots to an extreme state of poverty and depression.

**Act X of 1859.**—The first remedial measure was Act X of 1859, passed by Lord Canning's Government and described by Lord Canning as a real and earnest attempt to improve the position of the ryots of Bengal and to open to them a prospect of freedom and independence, which they had not hitherto enjoyed, by clearly defining their rights and by placing restrictions on the power of the zamindars such as ought long ago to have been provided. The Act restricted the landlords' power of distraint and created four classes of cultivators, *viz*, (1) Those who had held land at the same rates of rent since the Permanent Settlement



Their rents were not to be raised (2) Those who had held land at the same rent for 20 years They were to be presumed to have held it since the Permanent Settlement unless the contrary was proved and were to have the same privilege as regards permanence of rental as the first class (3) Those who had held their land for twelve years In their case it was provided that continuous cultivating possession of a holding should confer a definite status, called occupancy right on the cultivators and that their rents should not be enhanced except on specified grounds *e g*, if the rent actually paid was proved to be less than the prevailing rent if the ryots held more land than they paid rent for or if the productivity of the land had been increased without their individual efforts (4) Those who had held their land for less than twelve years They remained in the position of tenants at will *i e* they were liable to have their rents enhanced and to be ejected by the landlords for non payment

**Failure of Act X of 1859** —The great reform introduced by this Act was the creation of the occupancy right the principle it

established has been the bases of all subsequent tenancy legislation. The Act did not, however, prove a solution of the agrarian problem. Its chief defect was that neither the right of occupancy which it recognized in the tenant nor the right of enhancing rents which it recognized in the landlord were adequately secured. In most cases neither could discharge the *onus probandi* laid on him. In order to establish a right of occupancy, the tenant was required to prove that he had cultivated the same plot of ground for twelve successive years. In order to obtain an increase of rental, the landlord had the difficult task of proving that the value of the produce had increased in the same proportion as that in which he demanded that his rent should be enhanced. Neither being able to discharge the burden of proof, the Act merely gave the one a right which he could not establish and the other a right which he could not legally enforce.

Where the population was sparse, the tenants refused to pay rents unless the landlords agreed to their terms. Where it was dense or the landlords were powerful, they were treated as tenants-at-will. The latter was especially the case in Bihar,

where the purposes of the Act were defeated by the power of landlords in some cases great territorial magnates by the practice of letting out land for short periods at rack-rents and by the ignorance of the tenants, who were so helpless and knew so little of their legal position that they were unable either to maintain their rights out of Court or to go to the Courts to enforce them by legal process

**The question of road and public works cesses** —It was a long vexed question whether the terms of the Permanent Settlement precluded the imposition of cesses or special rates on landlords in order to provide the means of extending elementary education and of constructing and maintaining roads and other works of public utility The object of the Permanent Settlement as expressly stated in the Regulation bringing it into force was to put an end to the practice observed by former Governments of altering and raising the land revenue from time to time and so terminate the uncertainty as to the proportion of the produce of the soil that might be exacted by the State A pledge was given that the public demand should be fixed

and permanent, and the scope of this pledge was defined by the express statement that no demand would ever be made upon the land-owners, their heirs and successors "for an augmentation of the public assessment in consequence of the improvement of their respective estates" It was contended on behalf of the landlords, whom the Bengal Government supported, that this undertaking made it unjust for Government to levy, whether for education or for roads, any provincial tax or rate or cess, the main burden of which would fall on permanently settled land

The question was settled definitively in a despatch sent in 1870 by the Duke of Argyll, then Secretary of State for India The conclusion arrived at was that "rating for local expenditure is to be regarded, as it has hitherto been regarded in all the provinces of the Empire, as taxation separate and distinct from the ordinary land revenue, that the levying of such rates upon the holders of land, irrespective of the amount of their land assessment, involves no breach of faith on the part of the Government, whether as regards holders of permanent or of temporary tenures, and that, where such rates are levied

at all they ought as far as may be possible to be levied equally without distinction and without exemption upon all the holders of property assessable to the rate '.

Effect was given to this decision by the Road Cess Act passed in 1871 which authorized the raising of a local rate or cess for the construction and maintenance of roads and other means of communication. This measure also directly affected landlords and tenants by prescribing a valuation of the land and a record of the holders of various landed interests. For the purpose of the valuation the landlords were required to render an account of the rents received by them a provision which was made effective by laying down that no rents should be recoverable by law unless so returned. The same process was gone through with all who held under the landlords in various gradations till the actual root was reached, each person in the chain of sub infeudation being required to file a statement of the holdings under him.

The Act soon proved a popular measure among the roots who found the register of estates and censures a real protection for many took care to secure copies of the landlord's

returns and refused to pay anything beyond the rental entered in them

**Agrarian trouble in Bengal.**—Soon after this Act was passed, serious trouble was caused in the district of Pabna by the tenants' resistance to the exactions of landlords, who tried to secure forced agreements to pay enhanced rents and to amalgamate with the rents the customary but unauthorized cesses called *abwabs*. The tenants banded themselves together in opposition to these attempts, calling themselves *bidrohi* or rebels, and the movement acquired the character of a no-rent campaign. The Pabna rent disturbances, which took place in 1872-73, subsided gradually and had the effect of directing further attention to the question of tenant right. Indeed, they may be said to have initiated the discussions which eventually culminated in the enactment of the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885.

The necessity for remedial measures was emphasized in other parts of Eastern Bengal by the ryots combining in loosely organized leagues or unions, which sprung up as the occupancy ryots grew in number and repre-

sented a larger and larger section of the tenantry while the landlords persisted in claiming enhancements of their rents as the produce of the land increased in value. In Bihar also friction was caused by the landlords exercising the power of distraining their tenants' crops to an extent almost without parallel in Bengal which was beyond both the spirit and the letter of the law.

**The necessity for legislation** —After the Pabna rent disturbances the need of comprehensive legislation was clear, but it was postponed owing to the famine of 1874. As a temporary measure the Agrarian Disputes Act was passed in 1876 to meet similar emergencies by providing for the prompt and effectual settlement of disputes about rent in disturbed areas. The causes of disputes still remained and the state of the law was such as practically to constitute a denial of justice to aggrieved parties. Cases about rents which under an Act passed in 1869 were heard in the civil courts, were subject to a dilatory technical procedure which operated to the disadvantage both of the tenant who complained of a rack rent

or of illegal distraint and of the landlord who sought an enhanced rent or the recovery of arrears of rent

The position in 1878 was summed up by the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Ashley Eden, in the words—" In Bengal the primary want is a ready means of recovering rents which are clearly due and which are withheld either for the sake of delay or in pursuance of some organized system of opposition to the zamindar In Bihar what is most wanted is some ready means of enabling the ryot to resist illegal restraint, illegal enhancement and illegal cesses, and to prove and maintain his occupancy rights " The case of the Bihar peasantry specially called for redress They were, he stated, " poor, helpless, discontented men bound down to a state of extreme depression and misery,, tenants of the richest province of Bengal, yet the poorest and most wretched class we find in the country entirely at the mercy of their landlords " Similarly the Indian Famine Commission of 1880 described the relations of landlord and tenant in Bihar as being those of a high-handed proprietary body on the one hand, habitually disregarding the law, and



on the other a tenantry ignorant, very helpless and sunk in the most abject poverty

**The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885**—A special Committee was appointed in 1878 to devise remedies for the abuses prevalent in Bihar, and next year a Rent Law Commission was appointed to prepare a digest of the law on the subject of rent whether case-made or statutory and to prepare a consolidating Bill. Eventually the measure which is known as the Bengal Tenancy Act was passed into law in 1885. This great measure is based on three guiding principles *viz*—(1) to give the ryot fixity of tenure, (2) to enable the landlord to obtain a fair share of the increased value of the produce of the soil—in other words a reasonable increase of rents and (3) to provide for the settlement of disputes between landlords and tenants on equitable principles. Act X of 1850 had provided that occupancy right should be acquired by twelve years continuous possession of the same plot of land—a provision rendered infructuous by changes of holdings. This right was now acquired in all land held in the same village for that period, and the onus of disproving the ryot's claim was

thrown on the landlord The ryot's right of transfer was also recognized

The Act has some points of similarity with the Irish Land Act of 1881, which aimed at securing for the Irish tenants what were called the three Fs—Fair rents settled by a tribunal, Fixity of tenure for those who paid their rents, and Free sale, *i e*, the right of the tenant to dispose of his interest

**Surveys and settlements.**—The Bengal Tenancy Act is regarded as the tenant's Magna Charta, but it is doubtful whether it would have proved an effective remedy for agrarian trouble, whether indeed it would have had much more beneficial effects than previous measures for the protection of the tenants, unless legislation had been supplemented by executive action Even after its enactment it was found that rents were being illegally enhanced and that the same abuses existed in Bihar as before it was passed It was felt that without a cadastral survey and a record of rights these abuses would continue, and peace and good-will between landlord and tenant would not be secured Government accordingly put in force the provisions of the Act enabling a

survey and settlement to be made, the effect of which is that the land is measured and a record made of the tenant's holding, rent and status a copy of which serves instead of a lease. The result has been to protect him against encroachment and to restore to him a large portion of the customary rights which he lost after the Permanent Settlement.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### Bengali Literature.

When British rule began, literature in Bengal was at a low ebb. The man of letters had been dependent for support on the patronage of the powerful and wealthy, and private patronage had almost ceased on the overthrow of the Mughal Government. As in England at the same time, "the age of patronage had passed away, the age of general curiosity and intelligence had not arrived." At a time when printing in the languages of the country had still to be introduced, writers had little to hope for from the general public, which was moreover mostly illiterate. Further, the social and political conditions prevailing during the disruption of the Mughal Empire were adverse to literary productiveness. There was no prose literature of any kind, and the eighteenth century produced only two poets of real note, Ram Prasad Sen and

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\* This chapter makes no pretence to be a complete account of Bengali literature during the period of British rule. It is a mere sketch inserted because a history of the period cannot be considered adequate without an account, however brief, of its greatest writers.

Bharat Chandra Rai, both of whom flourished under the patronage of Raja Krishna Chandra Rai of Nadia before the British assumed direct rule. Still there was a germ of poetry among the *labiwalas* and *jatiawalas* whose works, marred by a certain grotesqueness, had some grace of form and an approach to simplicity of style which offers a strong contrast to the Sanskritized style affected by others.

Bengali literature began to revive in the early part of the nineteenth century when the foundations of Bengali prose were laid. Some spade work had been done in the latter part of the previous century by the efforts of English officers of the East India Company in making translations and compiling grammars such as Halhed's *Grammar of the Bengali Language* (1778). Good service was also rendered by a band of Bengali pandits mainly connected with the College of Fort William or working under the auspices of the Serampore missionary scholar Dr Carey such as Ram Ram Basu who published *Pratapaditya Charitra* in 1801, Mrityunjay Bidyalankar and Rajab Lochan Mukhopadhyaya. A further stimulus was given by the educative work of the Serampore Mission under Dr Carey.

The pioneer of Bengali prose literature was Raja Ram Mohan Rai (1772-1833), whose earliest Bengali publication appeared in 1815. A religious and social reformer, his works are devoted mainly to religious and social subjects; he is described by Mr R C Dutt as the first brilliant product of European influence in India and the father of prose literature in Bengal. The first of the poets of the century was Iswar Chandra Gupta (1809-58), a witty writer of satires, which have earned for him the title of the greatest Bengali humourist.

It is significant of the change of conditions in the nineteenth century that Iswar Chandra Gupta and other distinguished writers were associated with the press. He himself made his influence felt by means of a monthly paper, the *Prabhakar*, which he started in 1830. The dramatist Dinabhandu Mitra and the novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterji served their apprenticeship under him on that paper. Akshay Kumar Datta, at the age of 23, became editor of the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*, a journal started by Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore in 1843. At a later date Bankim Chandra Chatterji himself founded in 1872, a magazine, the *Banga Darsan*, in which many of his novels first appeared.

The leaven of new ideas due largely to the introduction of English education was at work from about 1830 onwards, when there was not only an increasing output of works of merit but a sustained effort to express new ideas in simpler style. Akshay Kumar Datta a forcible prose writer devoted himself to the cause of social progress and reform as also did his great contemporary Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-91) who throughout his long life sought to improve the position of Hindu women by denouncing the evils of polygamy, especially among Kulins and advocating the remarriage of widows condemned to a life of enforced celibacy. The first great work of the latter *Betal Pancharinsati* was published in 1847 and his most famous *Sitar Banabas*, in 1862. The abuses of polygamy were also the theme of a drama *Kulina Kula Sarrasva* by Ram Narayan Tarkaratna (1823-85) which appeared in 1854 and was followed by his *Ratnawali*. A greater dramatist was soon to appear in the person of Dinabhandu Mitra (1829-73) whose most famous work *Nal Darpan* was directed against the abuses attendant on indigo planting in Bengal.

Drama also at one time attracted the versatile genius of Michael Madhusudan Datta (1824-73) a convert to Christianity, who like many of his contemporaries, was imbued with admiration for English literature and began by writing poems in English, such as the *Captive Ladie* (1849). Mr Bethune, on receiving a copy of this poem wrote to Madhusudan Datta that he could render a far greater service to his country and have a better chance of achieving an enduring reputation for himself if he employed his talents in improving the standard and adding to the stock of the poems of his own language. Hitherto Madhusudan Datta had not attempted to write in Bengali. It was not till 1858, when he was 34 years of age, that, fired by the success of the *Ratnavali*, he took to writing dramas in Bengali. From these he passed to the field of epic poetry, in which his genius was to find its truest expression. Here he broke new ground, inspired by the belief that there was no great future for Bengali poetry until it shook off the trammels of rhyme. His first effort in this line was *Tilottama* (1860), his greatest *Meghanad Badh* (1861).



Madhusudan Datta is regarded as the greatest Bengali poet of the century, and contemporary with him was Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838-94) who is, *omnium consensu* the greatest Bengali novelist. Strongly influenced by the romantic style of Sir Walter Scott he was not only the founder of the modern school of Bengali fiction, which has had an extraordinary popularity but to him also the credit is largely due of transforming the character of Bengali prose writing. 'Anything more monstrous' remarks Sir George Grierson, 'than the prose dialect as it existed in the first half of the nineteenth century, it is difficult to conceive. Books were written excellent in their subjects eloquent in their thoughts, but in a language from which something like ninety per cent of the genuine Bengali vocabulary was excluded and its place supplied by words borrowed from Sanskrit.'

A lead in the revolt against the Sanskritized style was given by Piari Chand Mitra (1814-83) who wrote under the *nom-de-plume* of Tek Chand Thakur and in 1858 published a novel called *Illaler Gharer Dulal* which has been held to be comparable with

the works of Fielding and Molière. It eschewed the pedantic language which was regarded as the cachet of good writing and aimed at simplicity of diction. It was left however to Bankim Chandra Chatterji to popularize the literary prose style and bring it into closer touch with the spoken language—a consummation which has caused fiction to be adjudged to be the best product of Bengali prose.

Bankim Chandra Chatterji has had numerous successors in the field of fiction, but poetry and the drama have not been neglected, while writers such as Bhudeb Mukharji and Rajnarain Bose have influenced the social and religious life of Bengal. Among novelists may be mentioned Ramesh Chandra Dutt at the close of the nineteenth century and Sarat Chandra Chatterji in recent times, while special mention must be made of the late Nabin Chandra Sen, who has been described as the great poet of the Hindu revival of the present day, and of Rabindra Nath Tagore, who was awarded the Nobel prize for literature in 1913 and has a world-wide reputation.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### The Progress of Education

Conditions at the beginning of the nineteenth century —Any estimate of the educational progress made under British rule must take into account the fact that conditions not unlike those of the middle ages prevailed till a little over a century ago. Considering this the progress has been amazing especially in Bengal, where the number of University students in 1917-18 was as great as in the United Kingdom in the year before the great war. On the other hand it helps to explain why even now only one in every ten of the male population can read and write. It is hard at the present day to realize that books printed in the Indian languages were not available till the Serampore missionaries established a press in 1800 and that in Orissa the use of pen and paper was practically unknown. The Oriyas accustomed only to an iron stylus and strips of palm leaves had the greatest difficulty in writing with a pen on paper and in 1821 the Magistrate at Cuttack had regretfully, to admit

that, though he always gave the preference to Oriyas, he scarcely knew of a single man fit for employment as a clerk in the Government offices

In the absence of printing, books and the knowledge of reading were confined, as in mediæval Europe, to a fraction of the community. Learning was the monopoly of a small intellectual class, which devoted itself to the study of classical works, Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. It depended on the patronage of the powerful or wealthy, and the spring of patronage dried up with the disappearance of the Mughal courts and the altered circumstances of the Rajas and Nawabs. In the chaos attending the dissolution of the Mughal Empire the Islamic educational institutions fell into decay. According to Warren Hastings, the Madrasa founded by him at Calcutta was "almost the only complete establishment of its kind now existing in India, though they were once in universal use and the decayed remains of these schools are yet to be seen in every capital town and city of Hindostan and the Deccan." Lord Minto in 1811 found that the three principal seats of Hindu learning, Benares, Nadia and Tirhut, suffered from similar

neglect the cultivation of letters being confined to the few surviving persons who had been patronised by the native princes and others under the former Governments or to such of their immediate descendants as had imbibed a love of learning from their parents

It was, Lord Minto declared a fact of common repute confirmed by his own inquiries that science and literature were in a progressive state of decay The number of the learned is not only diminished but the circle of learning even among those who still devote themselves to it appears to be considerably contracted The abstract sciences are abandoned police literature neglected and no branch of learning cultivated but what is connected with the peculiar religious doctrines of the people The immediate consequence of this state of things is the disuse and even actual loss of many valuable books and it is to be apprehended that, unless Government interposes with a fostering hand the revival of letters may become hopeless from a want of books or of persons capable of explaining them The neglect of education was in his opinion a political danger as it frustrated measures designed for the better government of the people To the general

ignorance he ascribed, in part at least, the prevalence of lawlessness and crime. It was probably only by the more general diffusion of knowledge among the great body of the people that the seeds of these evils could be effectually destroyed. Private patronage being non-existent or inadequate, Government should step in and establish Hindu and Muhammadan colleges.

**The Charter Act of 1813.**—The Company was, however, still a trading corporation and had never recognized the promotion of education as one of its legitimate activities. It was not, in fact, acknowledged as one of the functions of the Government in India till the Charter Act of 1813 specifically laid down that not less than £10,000 (Rs one lakh) a year should be allotted for the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India.

**The Serampore Mission.**—For the establishment of the principle that an obligation vested on Government to foster education Bengal

was indebted to a band of Christian philanthropists in England known as the Clapham school who regarded education as a vehicle for spreading Christianity. Prominent among them were Charles Grant who after a service of 33 years in India became Chairman of the Court of Directors, Wilberforce who has won a niche in the temple of fame by his successful efforts to abolish the slave trade, and Zachary Macaulay another abolitionist and the father of the historian and essayist, Lord Macaulay. They were in sympathy and in close touch with the Serampore missionaries who had already done much for the cause of education by starting elementary schools and printing books.

By 1815 the Serampore missionaries had opened over 100 schools and in that year they published the first Bengali newspaper, the *Samachar Darpan* or Mirror of News a weekly journal. In 1818 they took up higher education opening the Serampore College a theological college which in 1827 received from the King of Denmark a charter empowering it to grant degrees. The college building was erected with funds provided by the missionaries themselves viz the salary received by Dr Carey for teaching in the College of Fort

William, the income of a school set up by Dr and Mrs Marshman and the profits of the press which Ward had started. At first Sanskrit and the vernaculars were the main objects of study, English being a secondary subject, but by 1824 the College reflected the growing preference for an English education and Sanskrit receded into the background.

**Private enterprise.**—Small as it was, the annual grant prescribed by the Charter Act was not all spent. It was devoted to the promotion of Oriental learning, being used for the printing of classics, stipends to scholars, etc. The object of Government was chiefly to obtain a regular supply of qualified Hindu and Muhammadan law officers for the Courts, the language of which was Persian. Nothing was done by it for English education till 1823. Educational societies began, however, to spring up, such as the Calcutta Book Society (1817) and the Calcutta School Society (1818), while in 1820 a Church of England theological college, the Bishop's College, was founded at Sibpur by Bishop Middleton, the first Bishop of Calcutta.

**The Hindu College.**—The first institution for higher English education was the outcome



of private enterprise, shared in by both Indians and Europeans. David Hare a philanthropic watchmaker of Calcutta, enthusiastically advocated the cause of English education for Indians. With him were associated the great Hindu reformer and writer, Raja Ram Mohan Rai and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Sir Edward Hyde East. A fund was raised, Hare provided a site and the result was the foundation in 1817 of the Hindu College of which the Presidency College is the lineal descendant. For six years however this institution was looked on with suspicion and distrust by the Hindu public who thought that English education would undermine their religion. For some time there were thirty members of the Committee but only 20 pupils at the College and the number of the latter did not rise above 70 till 1823 in spite of the fact that in order to attract students education was given free.

**Progress from 1823 to 1835** —In 1823 the Government began to realize its duties in regard to education and appointed a Committee of Public Instruction to which it made over the accumulated balances of the annual

grant Hitherto there had been no organizing body The Hindu College was saved from collapse by means of a grant and the appointment as Visitor of the scholar, Horace Hayman Wilson The association of Government with the College brought about a revolution of feeling on the part of the public, and in a few years the number of students rose to 400 These, in their turn, after finishing their education, started schools in which English was taught Another outcome of the Committee's activities was the foundation in 1824 of the Sanskrit College, which was accommodated in the same building as the Hindu College

Government continued to foster Oriental classical learning, and till 1835, with the exception of the Hindu College, all the larger institutions supported by it were Oriental in character and scope, the chief subjects of study being Arabic, Sanskrit, and Persian The Orientalists, as those who wished to continue this system were called, held the field; but there was a growing body of Anglicists, as those were called who desired to make English the basis of education One of the chief Anglicists was Raja Ram Mohan Rai,

who in 1823 wrote to Lord Amherst advocating the English system instead of Sanskrit, which he declared, ' would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature

**Dr Duff's work** —In 1830 Dr Duff, the first Indian missionary of the Church of Scotland, arrived in Calcutta after having been twice wrecked (first near the Cape of Good Hope and then on Saugor Island), and within a few months with the help of Raja Ram Mohan Rai he inaugurated the General Assembly's Institution which has grown into the modern Scottish Churches College. Duff was at the time only 25 years of age. For the remainder of his life he was a powerful influence in fostering the spread of education. He was a strong advocate of the adoption of the English system of education. He keenly supported the education of women as necessary for social progress. Holding that the medical profession was compatible with the highest ideas of caste his efforts were largely responsible for the foundation of the

Medical College in Calcutta in 1835 Education was to his thinking a solvent of Hinduism and calculated to advance Christianity in his own words, " a course of instruction that professes to convey truth of any kind becomes a species of religious education in India "

His work was not confined to Calcutta He carried education into the interior, his aim being to evangelize rural areas by means of catechists and converts trained in mission schools Having received a promise of a site from the head of the Kartabhaja sect of Hindus, he started schools with this object at Kalna and Ghoshpara Another was opened at Bansberia in the Hooghly district with funds provided by Sir James Outram Outram had protested against the annexation of Sind and refused to touch the prize money awarded to him, which he declared was blood money He devoted it to philanthropic purposes and put part of it at the disposal of Duff, who was thus enabled to purchase buildings from the Brahmo Samaj, which was obliged by want of funds to give up its education work Duff also founded a second college in Calcutta in 1843, the Free Church

Institution which, as its name implies was opened after he had seceded from the established Church of Scotland it has also been merged in the Scottish Churches College

**Adoption of English education, 1835** —The long controversy between the Orientalists and Anglicists was at length settled in 1835, when the Government of Lord William Bentinck decided in favour of English as a medium and subject of instruction largely in consequence of a minute by Mr (afterwards Lord) Macaulay the first Law Member He had been appointed Chairman of the Committee of Public Instruction but declined to serve under the system then existing "We are a board for wasting public money for printing books which are of less value than the paper on which they are printed was while it was blank for giving artificial encouragement to absurd history absurd metaphysics absurd physics absurd theology for raising up a breed of scholars who live on the public while they are receiving their education and whose education is so utterly useless to them that when they have received it they must either starve or live on the public all the rest of their lives "

Macaulay summed up the claims of English as a medium and subject of instruction in the words “ We are free to employ our funds as we choose, we ought to employ them in teaching what is best worth knowing, English is better worth knowing than Sanskrit or Arabic, the natives are desirous to be taught English and are not desirous to be taught Sanskrit or Arabic: neither as the languages of law nor as the languages of religion have the Sanskrit and Arabic any peculiar claim to our encouragement, it is possible to make natives of this country thoroughly good English scholars and to this end our efforts ought to be directed ”

Lord William Bentinck agreed and published a resolution announcing that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the people of India and that all the funds appropriated for the purposes of education would be best employed on English education alone

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Macaulay, it should be added, looked to English education to be a civilizing agency.

saying that the languages of Western Europe had civilised Russia and he could not doubt that they would do for the Hindu what they had done for the Tartar. The historian Sir John Seeley takes the same idealistic view of the decision, saying—"We were led to stand out boldly as civilisers and teachers. Macaulay's minute remains the great landmark in the history of our empire considered as an institute of civilisation. The Indian with knowledge of English was brought into contact with the culture of the west and with the progressive and liberalizing forces of modern life. It has even been said that English education made him a citizen of the world just as much as an Englishman because he is at home in the tongue which is the medium for great scientists, leaders of social progress and pioneers of political freedom."

**The position of the vernaculars** —Looking back on the discussion it is at first sight remarkable that the only languages seriously considered were English and the classical languages of India. The spoken languages of the people such as Bengali, Hindi and Oriya were not regarded as possible alternatives. They were summarily dismissed by

Macaulay, because both parties to the controversy ruled them out of court. "All parties," he wrote, "seem to be agreed on one point, that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India contain neither literary nor scientific information and are, moreover, so poor and rude that until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them. It seems to be admitted on all sides that the intellectual improvement of those classes of the people who have the means of pursuing higher studies can at present be effected only by means of some language not vernacular among them." Nothing could be more eloquent of the low esteem in which the languages and literature of the people were then held.

Lord William Bentinck's resolution directed that public funds should be expended on imparting a knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language. The Committee of Public Instruction held that this did not preclude the cultivation of the vernacular languages, as the decision of Government merely gave



a preference to education in English over education in the learned languages of India and they directed that the study of the vernacular should go hand in hand with that of English

**The Medical College, Calcutta** —The same year (1835) witnessed the introduction of the western system of medical training by the foundation of the Medical College at Calcutta. This involved a breaking away from old traditions. Hitherto the fear of contamination and loss of caste by touching a corpse had caused anatomy to be learnt by the dissection of models of wood or wax. Students now came forward to dissect the human body the name of the first to do so Madhusudan Gupta is honoured in the annals of the college. For many years the Medical College was the only institution of its kind in India. It was the first attempt to impart knowledge of a practical kind all other institutions so far founded by Government being academic in character.

**Education and Government service** —The next land mark in the history of education was the announcement made by Lord

Hardinge in 1844 that in the selection of candidates for public employment a preference should be given in every possible case to those who had received an education in English. The object in view was intelligible enough. Indians were required in increasing numbers for administrative work. It was hoped that education would improve the character of the public services and that simultaneously the hope of official employment would give an impulse to education—a kind of reciprocal action. Lord Hardinge's announcement however, started a vicious tradition that Government employment was the chief aim of education. A narrow view of its uses and advantages was engendered. It was soon necessary to sound a note of warning and to remind aspirants for posts under Government that an English education conferred no right to official employment, and that it was an avenue to other professions and not only to the public services.

**Educational policy till 1854.**—From 1835 till 1854 the energies of Government were concentrated on higher and secondary education. Nothing was done to diffuse education

among the masses *e g*, by primary or elementary schools it being believed that it would filter downwards whence the phrase 'the filtration theory of education' Practically all the funds available were spent on Government schools and colleges one result being the establishment of Zila or district schools which in 1854 were forty in number Four others *viz* Dacca Hooghly Krishnagar and Berhampore had developed into colleges, but there was no clear differentiation between schools and colleges The abolition of Persian as the language of the law courts in 1837 gave a further stimulus to the study of English and by 1854 English education had become firmly established in Bengal and Bihar but not in Orissa where English schools had to contend against conservatism and prejudice

**Female education** —There was one development of educational policy in this period Government for the first time recognized that the promotion of education among girls and women came within the sphere of its activities For this the credit is mainly due to Mr Bethune Iegal Member of Council and President of the Council of Education as

the Committee of Public Instruction was called after 1842. It was at his instance that Lord Dalhousie's Government issued orders in 1850 that the functions of the Council were to extend to the supervision and encouragement of female education. Bethune himself founded a girl's school in Calcutta in 1849, which after his death in 1851 was maintained by Lord Dalhousie till 1856, when it was taken over by Government. This school has developed into the Bethune College.

#### **Sir Charles Wood's despatch of 1854.—**

The modern educational system was initiated by a despatch issued by the Directors in 1854, which is named after Sir Charles Wood, President of the Board of Control (afterwards Lord Halifax), under whose orders it was drafted. This epoch-making document set to rest, for good or ill, the vexed question of the medium of instruction by directing that it should be English in the higher and the vernacular in the lower branches of instruction. It laid down the principles to be followed in a co-ordinated system of education leading from the primary school to the university. It inaugurated systematic and general educational work. hitherto there had been

many schools but no system The chief reforms which it inculcated were —

(1) The constitution of an Education Department to formulate and direct educational policy The Department came into being in 1855 with Mr Gordon Young of the Civil Service as the first Director of Public Instruction (2) The establishment of Universities at Calcutta and the other Presidency towns (3) The introduction of a system of grants-in aid on the basis of religious neutrality (4) The extension of vernacular schools for elementary education (5) The support by Government of female education

Lastly education was not to be merely literary Useful and practical knowledge was to be imparted practical agriculture was to be taught in the schools professional training especially in law medicine and civil engineering was to be given under the control of the University

**The foundation of the Calcutta University**—The University of Calcutta was incorporated by an Act passed in 1857 the year of the Mutiny Modelled on the London University as it then existed it was an

examining, rather than a teaching, university. The actual teaching was given in what are known as affiliated colleges, *i.e.*, colleges authorized by the University to prepare and present candidates for its examinations. The University prescribed the curricula to be followed, but otherwise exercised no supervision over the colleges, which had moreover no voice in the prescription of curricula.

**Progress from 1854 to 1882.**—The policy of Government was laid down by the despatch of 1854 in the words—"We desire to see local management under Government inspection and assisted by grants-in-aid taken advantage of wherever it is possible to do so, and that no Government colleges or schools shall be founded in future in any district where a sufficient number of institutions exist, capable with assistance from the State of supplying the local demand for education. We look forward to a time when any general system of education entirely provided by Government may be discontinued, with the gradual advance of the system of grants-in-aid." This marked a reversal of policy. Hitherto public funds had been

devoted almost exclusively to Government institutions. The goal was now to be the diffusion of education by private effort. Grants were to be given to private individuals or local Committees provided their schools were adequately maintained. They were to be an inducement to bring private schools under Government inspection and so keep up a proper standard.

The number of college students increased rapidly and in 1882 had risen to nearly 4,000. By 1882 observes the Calcutta University Commission of 1917-19. Western education, with the affiliating university as its guardian, had fully taken root in India and most completely in Bengal. The university degree had become the accepted object of ambition, the passport to distinction in the public services and in the learned professions. Already the social value of Western education was reflected in the fact that a man who had taken his degree or even only passed the entrance examination of the University, had a definitely improved value in the marriage market. Collegiate education during this period continued to be largely dependent on Government, which in 1855 had founded the Presidency College to serve as a model to others.

From 1854 to 1882 only four new private colleges were founded, and they were all in Calcutta. In spite of the grant-in-aid system no new college was set up by private initiative in the rest of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and in 1882 two-thirds of the students owed their education to Government colleges.

The case was very different in the field of secondary education, where the system of grants had an influence so great that the Education Commission of 1882-83 declared that under the operation of the scheme for eliciting private effort, by far the larger proportion—in mere amount it might almost be said to be the whole—of the education of Bengal had come to be provided by the people themselves. The number of English schools in these years increased from 47 to 209.

While, however, private schools in which English was taught freely took advantage of the system of grants-in-aid the Indian community was apathetic about promoting elementary education in the vernacular. The education of the masses did not receive a real impetus till 1872, when the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir George Campbell, took up the



question and gave practical proof of his declaration that the great object of Government was now to extend primary education among the masses of the people. Large grants were given for its development—the budget allotment increased from about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  lakh to 8 lakhs—and the number of primary schools assisted by Government soon rose from 2 450 with 65 000 pupils to 12 000 with over 300 000 pupils.

Complaints were even now made as to the excessively literary character of the higher education which was given. Sir Richard Temple, Lieutenant Governor from 1874 to 1877, observed that University degrees were for the most part sought merely as a means of obtaining employment in Government service and that both the public services and the Bar were overcrowded professions. Young men found that they could obtain neither practice nor posts; discontent and restlessness were consequently engendered among the rising generation. "Too many," he said, "direct their studies to literature and philosophy and too few to practical science. The great problem is, as it seems to me, to guide a large portion of the educated youth into other walks

of life besides the learned professions It is sad to reflect that very many estimable men who are pining and languishing at the Bar or in public departments, for lack of employment or promotion, might, if otherwise educated, have been land surveyors or civil engineers or trained mechanics or mining engineers or geological surveyors or veterinary practitioners or practical botanists or foresters or scientific gardeners or engravers or lithographers or architects or chemists or medical men, for each and all of which capacities there is now a field in Bengal " Similar complaints are still being made nearly fifty years after these remarks were penned

**The Education Commission of 1883.**—A change of policy was suggested by the Education Commission of 1883 It recommended the progressive devolution of secondary and collegiate education upon private enterprise and the withdrawal of Government from competition with it The Government of India, accepting its advice, declared that its policy was to supplement the limited funds of the State by calling forth every available private agency In the field of primary education alone Government was ready to undertake

direct responsibility for large expenditure. Higher and secondary education were to be developed by local bodies and private agencies. Government was to withdraw from the direct control of colleges and secondary schools with one important reservation viz., it would maintain a limited number of institutions to serve as models and keep up a high standard. It would retain control by means of the inspection of all public institutions and otherwise would confine itself to the distribution of grants in aid.

Private enterprise gave a ready response. Between 1882 and 1902, the number, of private colleges leapt up they grew out of high schools and depended mainly or wholly upon fees. During the same twenty years the number of high schools in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa rose from 209 to 535 of which five-sixths were under private management. Ten years later their number was greater than in the whole of the rest of British India. The diffusion of elementary education did not keep pace with that of higher and secondary. "It was not education at large but English education, preparatory to the university course, which aroused the enthusiasm of Bengal."

**The Universities Act, 1904.**—University education down to 1904, both in Calcutta and elsewhere in India, rested, in the words of the Calcutta University Commission of 1917—19, “ upon the assumptions that a university might have as its primary functions the conduct of examinations and the definition of their subject-matter, that by means of examinations and regulations alone the continued efficiency of teaching institutions could be adequately guaranteed, and that the duty of training men for life could safely be left to self-contained colleges organized primarily with a view to the preparation of candidates for an examination ” The universities “ had nothing to do directly with the training of men but only with the examining of candidates, they were not concerned with learning except in so far as learning can be tested by examinations ”

The task of reform was taken up by the Viceroy, Lord Curzon Unless the Universities had been reformed, there would, he said, be a continued rush of immature stripplings to the universities, not to learn but to earn The examination course would have

generation Standards would have sunk lower and lower The output would have steadily swollen in volume at the cost of all that education ought to mean, and "India would have awakened to the fact that she had for years been bartering her intellectual heritage for the proverbial mess of pottage, and no more '

The Universities Act of 1904 did not have the desired consummation—as will be stated later the character of university education left much to be desired—but it was an honest effort to place university education on a sounder basis to stop cramming and ensure better teaching The constitution of the universities was remodelled so as to give the teachers connected with affiliated colleges more control in academical matters New conditions were laid down for the affiliation and inspection of colleges so as to maintain a higher standard Affiliation was to be granted only if the colleges had an adequate staff proper equipment and sound finances After affiliation they were to be subject to inspection The power of affiliation and disaffiliation was to rest with Government to which the University would make its recommendations

The object in view was, briefly, to place the government of universities in competent hands, with Government in the background to keep them up to the mark. But the Act aroused keen opposition in Bengal, where it was feared that Bengali influence in the Calcutta University would be weakened and that the spread of higher education would be checked. It was represented that the University was to be officialised or made a department of a bureaucratic Government. This attitude was partly due to self-interest on the part of persons who owned private colleges and feared they might disappear under the new system, but it was also partly due to a genuine apprehension that the new system would block the avenues to university education.

These gloomy prognostications were falsified. The number of students of the Calcutta University, so far from suffering diminution, increased till in 1917-18 it aggregated 28,000, approximately equal to the total number of students in the eighteen universities of the United Kingdom. In addition to dealing with this vast number, the University was responsible for the educational control of over 800 schools.

### **The Universities of Patna and Dacca —**

The jurisdiction of the Calcutta University had by this time been curtailed by the establishment under an Act passed in 1917 of the Patna University with control over educational institutions in the province of Bihar and Orissa. It is a university of the old type with colleges of two kinds affiliated to it viz, university colleges within a circumscribed area and external colleges in any of the towns of Muzaffarpur Bhagalpur Cuttack and Hazaribagh.

Some relief has also been obtained by the foundation of the Dacca University in 1921 but the number of students in that university was only a little over 1 000 in 1923. The Dacca university is of a type recommended by the Calcutta University Commission of 1917-18. Its jurisdiction is limited to the town of Dacca and a radius of 5 miles in its neighbourhood. It is residential and not affiliating in character and it is based on the tutorial and not merely on the examining system. An external body known as the Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education conducts the matriculation and intermediate examinations.

**Other changes.**—The Rangoon University having been constituted for Burma by an Act of 1920, the jurisdiction of the Calcutta University is now confined to Bengal and Assam. In 1921 the Governor of Bengal was made Chancellor in place of the Governor-General of India and the Bengal Government became the controlling authority, with power to appoint the Vice-Chancellor, in place of the Government of India. Of other developments the most noticeable is the introduction of post-graduate teaching and research conducted directly by the University.

**Political effects of education in Bengal.**—

The state of university and secondary education in Bengal has recently been the subject of exhaustive review by the Calcutta University Commission of 1917-19, which issued a monumental report on the subject. They pointed out that the great majority of university students pursue purely literary courses, which do not fit them for any but administrative, clerical, teaching and (indirectly) legal careers. "Bengal is unlike any other civilized country in that so high a proportion of its educated classes set before them a university degree as the natural goal of ambition,



and seek this goal by means of studies which are almost purely literary in character, and which therefore, provide scarcely any direct professional training" The secondary school system was described as being on the whole extremely inefficient It is impossible for the vast majority of Bengali boys to obtain from their schools a really sound general education such as the schools of many other countries provide The general results of the system were economically wasteful and socially dangerous and must in the end lead to the intellectual impoverishment of the country

The Commission sounded a grave note of warning as to the political effects of the system After observing that, though practically all graduates find employment of one sort or another there is a large number of students who find no outlet such as their academic training justifies them in expecting, they conclude It is inevitable that men of ability who after an arduous training find themselves in such a situation should be deeply discontented and should be inclined to lay the blame—as is the natural temptation of the dissatisfied in all lands, and above all

in India—upon the Government of their country      The existence, and the steady increase, of a sort of intellectual proletariat, not without reasonable grievances, forms a menace to good government, especially in a country where, as in Bengal, the small educated class is alone vocal. It must be an equal menace whatever form the Government may assume. So long as the great mass of the nation's intelligent manhood is driven, in ever increasing numbers, along the same, often unfruitful, course of study, which creates expectations which cannot be fulfilled, and actually unfits those who pursue it from undertaking many useful occupations necessary for the welfare of the community, any Government, however it may be constituted, whether it be bureaucratic or popular, must find its work hampered by an unceasing stream of criticism and of natural demands for relief which cannot possibly be met.

“ The growing demand of the people of Bengal for education facilities is one of the most impressive features of our age. It is in itself healthy and admirable. It is increasing in strength and volume every year. But, owing in part to social conditions and in

part to the educational methods, which the traditions of the last half-century have established, this powerful movement is following unhealthy and unprofitable channels, and unless new courses can be cut for it, the flood may devastate instead of fertilising the country."

## APPENDIX I.

### GOVERNORS AND LIEUTENANT-GOVERNORS.

#### Governors of Bengal (1758-74).

	Years of assumption of office
Lord Clive .. .	1758
John Zephaniah Holwell* .	1760
Henry Vansittart .	1760
John Spencer* . .	1764
Lord Clive ..	1765
Henry Verelst .. ..	1767
John Cartier .. ..	1769
Warren Hastings ..	1772

#### Governors (also Governors-General) of Bengal (1774-1833).

Warren Hastings .. .	1774
Sir John Macpherson* ..	1785
Lord Cornwallis .	1786
Lord Teignmouth (Sir John Shore)	1793
Sir Alfred Clarke*	1798
Marquess Wellesley ,	1798
Lord Cornwallis .	1805
Sir George Barlow*	1805

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\* An asterisk is placed against the names of persons who held officiating or temporary appointments. The titles are those by which their holders are generally known and were in many cases conferred after the assumption of office.

Year of  
assumption  
of office.

Lord Minto	1807
Marquess of Hastings	1813
John Adam*	1823
Lord Amherst	1823
William Butterworth Bayley*	1828
Lord William Bentinck	1828

### Governors of Bengal and Governors-General of India, 1833-54

Lord William Bentinck	1833
Lord Metcalfe	1835
Lord Auckland	1837
Lord Ellenborough	1842
Lord Hardinge	1844
Lord Dalhousie	1848

### Lieutenant Governors of Bengal, 1854-1912.\*

Sir Frederick Halliday	1854
Sir John Peter Grant	1859
Sir Cecil Beadon	1862
Sir William Grey	1867
Sir George Campbell	1871
Sir Richard Temple	1874
Sir Ashley <sup>6</sup> Eden	1877
Sir Rivers Thompson	1882
Sir Stuart Bayley	1887

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\*Official appointments of less than six months are omitted. Lord Macdonald and Sir Charles Cecil Stevens held office for six months, and Sir James Ross for one year.

Year of  
assumption  
of office

1890

1893

1895

1897

1898

1902

1903

1908

1911

### Lieutenant-Governors of Eastern Bengal and Assam.

Sir Bamfylde Fuller 1905

Sir Lancelot Hare . 1906

Sir Charles Bayley . 1911

### Lieutenant-Governors of Bihar and Orissa.

Sir Charles Bayley . 1912

Sir Edward Gait .. 1915

Sir Edward Levinge\* 1918

### Governors of Bengal from 1912.

Lord Carmichael .. . 1912

Lord Ronaldshay , 1917

Lord Lytton .. . 1922

### Governors of Bihar and Orissz.

Lord Sinha / . 1920

Sir Henry Wheeler

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